



# Mapping Decentralized Evaluation Functions Across UN Agencies

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## **AGM 2025: Background document**

Prepared by the Decentralised Evaluation Function Working Group (SO1) 2024.

The WG propose to finalise this document in Q1 2025. It will then be circulated electronically for approval by UNEG Heads to be published as a UNEG reference document.

# Acknowledgements (to be inserted)

## List of Acronyms

CapQual -	Capacity and Quality Unit
CEF	Contingency Evaluation Fund
CEP	Costed Evaluation Plan
CES	Country Evaluation Specialists
CIEPS -	Criteria-based Integrated Evaluation Planning System
CO	Country Offices
CPD	CPD - Country Programme Document
CPE	Country Programme Evaluation
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DE	Decentralized Evaluations
DEFP	Department Evaluation Focal Point
DEQAS	Decentralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System
EER	Evaluations of Emergency Responses
EFP	Evaluation Focal Points
EMCP	Evaluation Manager Certification Programme
ERC	Evaluation Resource Center
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
EVAL	Evaluation Office (specific to ILO)
EvalPro	Evaluation Learning Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KII	Key informant interview
LTA	Long Term Agreement
MCES	Multi-Country Evaluation Specialists
MLR	Management-Led Review
OED	Office of Evaluation
OEV	Office of Evaluation

OIG	Office of Inspector General (used in different contexts, here specific to IOM)
OL	Operating Limit
PHQA	Post-Hoc Quality Assessment
PRC	Peer Review Committee
PRIMA	Project Information and Management Application
RB	Regional Bureaus
REA	Regional Evaluation Advisers
REAs	Regional Evaluation Associates
REC	Regional Evaluation Committees
REO	Regional Evaluation Officer
RES	Regional Evaluation Specialists
REU	Regional Evaluation Unit
ROMERO	Regional Monitoring, Evaluation and Risk Management Officer
RPE	Regional Programme Evaluation
RPMEA	Regional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor
SREO	Senior Regional Evaluation Officers
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEGP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
WFP	World Food Programme

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# 1. Introduction

As part of its 2024 work plan, the UNEG Decentralized Evaluation Working Group (DEWG) planned to update the mapping of key features of decentralized evaluation (DE) functions across the UN system. This report builds on the first edition conducted in 2020<sup>1</sup> aiming to facilitate learning, share experiences across UN entities, and potentially support future work by UNEG on DE.

The present report includes **12 expanded case studies**, covering 12 UN entities. These are structured along six dimensions of DE, ensuring consistency and comparability across agencies. The case studies were developed by collecting and analyzing data from multiple lines of evidence, including **19 individual and group interviews** with **37 UN evaluation professionals** at headquarters (HQ), regional, and country levels. Additional lines of evidence include a questionnaire-based self-assessment conducted by UN entities in 2023, and an extensive document review covering the evaluation function's policy frameworks, peer reviews, guidance, manuals and tools, as well as grey literature. A full list of interviewees is provided in Annex 1.

With a more comprehensive analysis and enriched perspectives, this edition of the mapping report aims to enhance learning, foster knowledge sharing, and provide a robust foundation for future normative work by UNEG on DE.

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<sup>1</sup> UNEG (2020). [Decentralized Evaluation Functions Across UN Agencies](#) (retrieved December 4, 2024).

## 2. FAO

### 2.1. DE architecture and its enabling environment

Evaluations at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) can be distinguished<sup>2</sup> in two types: those managed by the Office of Evaluation (OED) and those managed outside of OED, sometimes referred to as evaluations under Budget Holder’s responsibility<sup>3</sup>. FAO’s Evaluation Charter, published in 2010,<sup>4</sup> governs exclusively the operations of the OED and does not extend to evaluations managed by budget holders. The latter reportedly constitute the majority of all FAO evaluations.<sup>5</sup>

The OED has recently undergone a significant restructuring of its evaluation function, leading to the discontinuation of a previous decentralization initiative, and with it the distinction between centralized and decentralized evaluations. The current framework, termed “OneOED”, is outlined in the organization’s Evaluation Strategy 2023-2025 and adopts an “integrated decentralization” approach.<sup>6</sup> Under the new arrangement, OED has no longer a decentralized function, but rather decentralized evaluation personnel.

Following the new strategy, OED has established five regional evaluation teams led by P4-level Regional Evaluation Officers (REO) who report directly to a P5-level Senior Evaluation Officer at OED. REO manage teams comprising P3-level Evaluation Specialists, P2-level Evaluation Analysts, and administrative staff. Each REO covers a specific region, although only three are physically stationed in those regional offices with the bulk FAO’s programming: Africa; Asia and the Pacific; Latin America and the Caribbean.

The REO positions had already been established following the previous decentralization initiative<sup>7</sup>. However, REO previously reported to Regional Directors, so their terms of reference were adjusted to reflect the changes brought upon by the new strategy. This realignment was reportedly driven by the need to preserve independence<sup>8</sup> and to secure continued funding for these positions<sup>9</sup>. REO are independent and fully dedicated to evaluation tasks, contributing not only to evaluations within their region, but also to global evaluation initiatives, and performing additional duties such as thematic coverage or focus on cross-cutting issues.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Key informant Interview (KII).

<sup>3</sup> FAO (2019). OED project evaluation manual for decentralized offices – Planning and conducting project evaluations under Budget Holder’s responsibility. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.fao.org/evaluation/resources/manuals-and-guidelines/en>

<sup>4</sup> FAO (2010). Charter for the FAO Office Of Evaluation. PC 103/5. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.fao.org/evaluation/resources/manuals-and-guidelines/en>

<sup>5</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>6</sup> FAO (2023a). FAO Evaluation Strategy 2023-2025. PC 135/3 Rev.1. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.fao.org/evaluation/resources/manuals-and-guidelines/en>

<sup>7</sup> FAO (2020a). Enhancing FAO’s capacity to evaluate contributions at country level: Proposal for Strengthening Evaluation in Decentralized Offices. PC 128/6. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.fao.org/3/nc856en/nc856en.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> FAO (2020b). FAO. 2020. Management Observation of the Proposal for Strengthening Evaluation in Decentralized Offices. PC 128/6 Sup.1. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.fao.org/3/nc927en/nc927en.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Source: KII.

## 2.2. Responsibilities for the DE function

### 2.2.1. Management arrangements

Evaluations managed by OED can be broadly categorized into three distinct models<sup>10</sup> based on OED's degree of involvement. In the first model ("OED-led" evaluations) the whole process is both managed and conducted internally. In the second model ("OED-managed" evaluations) OED manages the evaluation and external teams conduct it. In the third model ("OED-conducted" evaluations) OED takes a hands-on approach by managing the evaluations and either conducting or recruiting individual experts to assist.

The choice among these models is made based on the specific requirements of each evaluation, including considerations of capacity, expertise, and timing. Regardless of the model, and in line with the 2023-2025 Evaluation Strategy, OED maintains management oversight to ensure the quality and integrity of the evaluations bearing its name.

Evaluations not managed by OED are under the responsibility of the project's budget holder, as outlined in the OED manual for decentralized offices, which predates the 2023-2025 Evaluation Strategy. Budget holders are responsible for appointing an evaluation manager, subject to OED's agreement. To maintain independence, OED recommends that the EM should not have prior involvement in the project being evaluated. Options for appointing an EM include regional or sub-regional staff, other FAO divisions, or external hires from the OED Taleo Roster<sup>11</sup>.

### 2.2.2. Evaluation planning

The FAO Evaluation Charter requires that OED maintains a four-year rolling work plan for its evaluations.<sup>12</sup> In 2023, OED implemented a structured process for planning evaluations, known as "intake"<sup>13</sup>. The process uses predefined criteria such as learning needs, budget availability, timing, member country requests, and potential synergies, applied through an internal template to ensure evaluations align with FAO's strategic learning agenda and resource capabilities.

Before the introduction of this process, OED's autonomy to make decisions on its work plans was often constrained by donor requirements, as found by an independent assessment of FAO's evaluation function<sup>14</sup>. These constraints could lead to a workload that exceeded OED's capacity, with frequent requirements for specific evaluations from major donors including the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF)<sup>15</sup>. Among other things, the donor-driven focus had also reportedly limited OED's capacity to cover geographic and thematic areas adequately<sup>16</sup>. To address these challenges, and pivot towards a learning-based planning, the intake process was developed.

OED annually reviews country programmes approaching conclusion, to assess and decide on the necessity and timing of evaluations. This decision-making process considers the entire project portfolio within a country, avoiding isolated programme evaluations and aiming for a comprehensive assessment that includes learning

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<sup>10</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>11</sup> FAO (2019), 4.2.

<sup>12</sup> FAO (2010), 14.

<sup>13</sup> FAO (2023b). Rolling Work Plan of Evaluations 2024-2027 – Update. PC 137/2. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/e9b40699-714a-4a07-a0fd-df56b4c8e47d>

<sup>14</sup> FAO (2024). Independent Evaluation of FAO's Evaluation Function.

<sup>15</sup> FAO (2024), 99-105.

<sup>16</sup> FAO (2024), 106-127.



needs and previous commitments<sup>17</sup>. There are instances where evaluation requests are declined due to misalignment with FAO’s strategic learning agenda or lack of budget. When this happens, evaluations may be still carried out outside of OED (managed by “budget holders”), whereby OED can offer support and guidance, although these activities are not recorded in OED’s official systems. Where OED provides support to budget holders, it asks for reimbursement - as it falls outside OED’s charter-mandated responsibilities<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>18</sup> Source: KII.

### **2.2.3. Financial resources**

OED-managed evaluations have a structured financing system that includes both mandatory and voluntary contributions. Projects with budgets equal to or below a threshold of USD 6.2 million must allocate 0.8 percent of their budgets to an Evaluation Trust Fund, regardless of whether OED conducts the evaluation. Projects exceeding the threshold, or having a contractual requirement for evaluation by OED, are assessed by OED. If OED opts to evaluate these projects, they develop and include an evaluation budget within the overall project budget. If not, these projects still contribute 0.8 percent of their budget to the Trust Fund<sup>19</sup>. Not all projects need to financially contribute to the Trust Fund. Exemptions include projects under the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), coordination mechanisms, and short-term emergency operations like those funded by OCHA or CERF.

The Evaluation Trust Fund supports various evaluation activities, including project and portfolio evaluations, syntheses, systematic reviews, and costs related to management, monitoring, communication, and capacity building, aligned with the rolling work plan. The Fund is managed by OED, and starting from 2025, an Annual Report detailing financial operations and activities supported by the Trust Fund will be published<sup>20</sup>.

The independent assessment of FAO's evaluation function found that despite the Trust Fund's potential to support comprehensive and strategically aligned evaluations, it has often been used for accountability purposes. The recent updates to the evaluation threshold and guidelines are aimed to better align the Fund's use with the strategic evaluation needs of FAO<sup>21</sup>.

## **2.3. Quality controls**

### **2.3.1. Quality assurance**

OED has a quality assurance process that is currently undergoing development and is not yet fully harmonized. Quality assurance is primarily conducted through the review of draft reports by the evaluation manager's supervisor and the OED leadership through a rating tool. Evaluations are guided by a body of documents, such as the 2011 Quality Assurance Framework<sup>22</sup> and the 2015 Evaluation Manual<sup>23</sup>, both of which are anterior to the main changes in OED.

Evaluation quality standards are gradually improving, thanks to a series of internal "memo" guidelines, issued since 2022 on various evaluation topics, which complement the existing set of standard documents. Additionally, a 2024 OED-internal memorandum foresees a new quality assurance process involving a Quality Assurance Reviewer appointed by the OED Deputy Director. This reviewer, external to the evaluation team but within OED, would provide quality assurance using the mentioned rating tool<sup>24</sup>.

There are no provisions for quality assurance in evaluations managed by budget holders. The 2024 independent assessment recommends OED to establish a standardised, ideally externalised, ex-ante quality assurance

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<sup>19</sup> FAO (2023c). Office of Evaluation Trust Fund Guide. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/387c6129-81fb-45bf-9b01-5818a0ac4c9a>

<sup>20</sup> FAO (2023c).

<sup>21</sup> FAO (2024), 87-98.

<sup>22</sup> FAO (2011). Quality Assurance Framework for evaluation in FAO - OED guidelines. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/oed/docs/Evaluation\\_Docs/Guidelines/Framework\\_for\\_OED\\_Quality\\_Assurance\\_Framework.pdf](https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/oed/docs/Evaluation_Docs/Guidelines/Framework_for_OED_Quality_Assurance_Framework.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> FAO (2015). OED Evaluation Manual. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.fao.org/evaluation/resources/manuals-and-guidelines/en>

<sup>24</sup> FAO (2024), 235-248.

system, including checklists for all types of deliverables and a quality assurance grid, for all evaluations (OED-led and non-OED-led)<sup>25</sup>.

### **2.3.2. Quality assessment**

An external company has been contracted in 2022 by OED to review a batch of completed evaluations, providing ex-post quality assessment<sup>26</sup>. Reports are assessed following a standard template and comments are provided on the strengths and weaknesses of each report assessed. This information is used to diagnose areas for improvements and inform OED strategic planning. Separately, the independent assessment of FAO's evaluation function found that the quality of OED evaluations is generally good, with adequate data collection and analysis designs<sup>27</sup>.

Feedback from internal sources indicates that improving the rigor and quality of evaluations was one of the drivers of the OED reform, expecting that the OneOED approach will deliver more credible results<sup>28</sup>.

## **2.4. Ensuring impartiality and transparency**

OED uses several practices to ensure impartiality in its evaluations. The processes for designing evaluations and selecting team members are primarily managed by OED, which helps ensure that evaluations are conducted without undue influence. The regional presence of REO who report directly to OED rather than regional directors is another mechanism serves as a safeguard to maintain the integrity and impartiality of the evaluation findings.<sup>29</sup> The balanced representation of its evaluation teams, including both internal and external experts, international and local evaluators, as well as young evaluators with more experienced consultants, is also aimed at reducing bias and contributing to an impartial evaluation process.

The independent assessment found instances where OED personnel have successfully resisted pressure from leadership in country offices, particularly regarding evaluation recommendations<sup>30</sup>.

OED also maintains a number of provisions to ensure transparency in its process. The office makes it a practice to publish all OED-managed evaluation reports on the FAO website<sup>31</sup>. A periodic update of the evaluation work undertaken is provided in OED's Programme Evaluation Reports (PER)<sup>32</sup>. Systematic engagement with key stakeholders, including country officials, to ensure that evaluations meet specific country needs, such as during the intake process, also suggests a controlled approach to transparency without compromising the evaluations' impartiality.

## **2.5. Professional standards and capacity**

OED evaluations are managed by qualified evaluation professionals. REO are P4 international staff. The skills required to apply to this role include: extensive expertise in designing, planning, leading, and conducting

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<sup>25</sup> FAO (2024), Recommendations.

<sup>26</sup> Long Term Agreement for the External Post Assessment (EPA) Services. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/167085>

<sup>27</sup> FAO (2024), 199-227.

<sup>28</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>29</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>30</sup> FAO (2024), 161-171.

<sup>31</sup> Completed evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.fao.org/evaluation/list/completed/en>

<sup>32</sup> What have we learnt from FAO evaluations? Highlights from the Programme Evaluation Report 2023. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.fao.org/evaluation/programme-evaluation-report-2023/en>

development evaluations; substantial knowledge and experience in applying evaluation methodologies and managing evaluation processes; work experience in multiple locations, including field positions<sup>33</sup>.

OED provides some in-house capacity building activities, such as trainings on gender-responsive and culturally responsive evaluations and has contributed to produce system-wide guidance on gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion. A number of capacity development initiatives are still present. These include three publicly available eLearning courses on evaluation-related topics, available on the FAO portal (“Theory-based impact evaluation for rural poverty reduction”; “Monitoring and evaluation of child labour in agriculture”; “Developing a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan for food security and agriculture programmes”).

Insights from internal sources suggest that while capacity development of FAO staff outside of OED was emphasized under the previous strategy, it has become less of a focus under the new mandate, where OED directly manages evaluations through its own staff<sup>34</sup>.

The 2024 independent assessment recommends that OED should still work to enhance the evaluation capacities of budget holders, to enable them to conduct high-quality non-strategic evaluations, thereby freeing OED to focus on more complex evaluations and learning products<sup>35</sup>.

## **2.6. Utility, use, and follow-up**

### **2.6.1. Use of evaluation findings**

The FAO Evaluation Strategy 2023-2025 emphasizes the importance of using evaluations to support evidence-based decision-making. It aims to enhance OED’s capacity to producing evaluations that provide actionable evidence and recommendations<sup>36</sup>. As of October 2024, OED includes one Planning, Knowledge Management and Communications Unit. The unit is led by an Evaluation Officer, and includes one Senior KM Specialist and one Communications Coordinator, along with supporting staff<sup>37</sup>.

OED has in place several provisions and strategies to enhance the use, utility, and follow-up of evaluations, aimed at improving overall effectiveness and organizational learning. Evaluation syntheses<sup>38</sup> are developed as a knowledge product to distill learning from multiple evaluations across geographic regions and themes. A series of highlights from Programme Evaluation Reports are posted on OED’s website<sup>39</sup>. OED issues regular newsletters that aim to keep FAO’s personnel informed about ongoing evaluations and lessons learned. Evaluation managers at times organize evaluation debriefs with key users, such as programme managers and senior FAO in-country officials, to facilitate local ownership of the evaluation findings and channel learning through dialogue.

### **2.6.2. Management response**

The follow-up system for OED evaluations involves two steps. When recommendations are submitted, a management response is required from the relevant parties, indicating whether each recommendation is accepted and is describing the planned implementation approach. This management response is generally

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<sup>33</sup> From the Terms of Reference of a regional-level Evaluation Officer.

<sup>34</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>35</sup> FAO (2024), Recommendations.

<sup>36</sup> FAO (2023a), 12.

<sup>37</sup> From the OED Supervisory Organigram, accessed in October 2024.

<sup>38</sup> Evaluation at FAO – Regional Syntheses. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.fao.org/evaluation/list/regional-syntheses/>

<sup>39</sup> Evaluation at FAO – Highlights. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.fao.org/evaluation/highlights/en>

included in the final evaluation report, though not always<sup>40</sup>. The second step involves a follow-up report submitted to OED about a year later on the status of the implementation of the recommendations, with OED providing feedback. OED has developed guidance on responsibilities and procedure<sup>41</sup>.

However, OED does not maintain a register of recommendations, and there is no monitoring of their implementation status and effectiveness. To address these issues, the independent assessment recommended establishing a registry of OED recommendations to increase accountability, preserve institutional memory, ensure continuity, and incentivize the use and uptake of evaluation recommendations<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> FAO (2024), 333-334.

<sup>41</sup> FAO (2015). Oed Guidance. Responsibilities and procedures for management responses and follow-up reports on evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b79bd8ff-4cad-40e0-850e-eafafe0063b8/content>

<sup>42</sup> FAO (2024), Recommendations.

## 3. ILO

### 3.1. DE architecture and its enabling environment

Decentralized evaluations (DE) at the International Labour Organization (ILO) refer to evaluations where the primary responsibility, including resourcing, is assigned to regions and departments. According to the 2017 ILO Evaluation Policy, DE can encompass thematic evaluations, project evaluations, impact evaluations, joint evaluations, evaluability assessments, and internal reviews, including self-evaluations<sup>43</sup>. The Policy also differentiates between independent and internal DE based on whether they are managed by someone external to the evaluand, and between mandatory or non-mandatory<sup>44</sup>.

The broader ILO “network” for DE operates across four distinct levels: HQ, regional, departmental, and country levels, each playing a role in the DE architecture. At the HQ-based EVAL, the whole team supports DE among their other duties. This includes the Director and five professional staff members (one Senior Evaluation Specialist, two Senior Evaluation Officers, one Evaluation Officer, and one Communications and Knowledge Management Officer)<sup>45</sup>. The DE coverage is divided across various regions and departments, with each member having a specific regional or departmental focus. EVAL operates with structural independence from management functions and reports directly to the Director General of the ILO.

The regional layer of the DE network includes five Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Officers -1 P4, 3 P3 and one NOB- (RMEOs) stationed within the Regional Programme Units (RPUs) of ILO’s Regional Offices. These RMEOs support the planning and implementation of DE among other duties, although evaluation-related tasks reportedly take up most of their time<sup>46</sup>. They maintain a direct reporting line to the Chief of the RPU and a technical reporting line to the Director of EVAL<sup>47</sup>. At the department level, which is also HQ-based, each of the 10 departments is equipped with a staff member who assumes the role of department evaluation focal point (DEFP) alongside their primary job duties within their respective departments. DEFPs are appointed by their own departments. Across the Office, the DE network extends to at least 193<sup>48</sup> certified evaluation managers who are also ILO project staff.

Overall, EVAL provides technical guidance and assistance to the network and maintains final oversight to ensure quality and independence and approval for all independent DE evaluation reports. Each year, EVAL reports on the health of the evaluation function, including DE, to the ILO governing body to ensure accountability and provide updates against the evaluation strategy<sup>49</sup>. The ILO Evaluation Office has therefore, since 2011, coined the term “hybrid decentralized evaluations system” to reflect that its DE workflow process involves the Evaluation Office from start to finish—e.g., planning and initiation of evaluations, oversight, approval, dissemination and management response—on a centralized evaluation database and repository platform (i-eval discovery).

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<sup>43</sup> ILO (2017). ILO Evaluation policy, 19. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/resource/policy/ilo-evaluation-policy-2017>

<sup>44</sup> ILO (2017), 29.

<sup>45</sup> Contact us: Evaluation Office. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/contact-us-evaluation-office>

<sup>46</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>47</sup> From the Terms of Reference of Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Officers (RMEO).

<sup>48</sup> ILO (2024a). Annual evaluation report 2023-24. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/publications/annual-evaluation-report-2023-24-0>

<sup>49</sup> ILO (2020a). ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation: Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations, 4th ed. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/publications/ilo-policy-guidelines-results-based-evaluation-principles-rationale>

## 3.2. Responsibilities for the DE function

### 3.2.1. Management arrangements

The management of mandatory independent DE at the ILO is facilitated through an evaluation management system controlled and overseen by EVAL. For a DE to be deemed independent, it must be managed by a certified evaluation manager and overseen by EVAL. This manager is an ILO official, located in HQ Departments, regional offices and Country Offices, who is not involved with the evaluand and has undergone the specific Evaluation Manager Certification Programme (EMCP)<sup>50</sup> provided by the ILO since 2013 to become certified.

The appointment of evaluation managers is a voluntary process facilitated by an internal platform where RMEOs post requests for evaluation management support. ILO officials can then apply to these posts, aligning their expertise and interests with evaluation needs.

While over 190 officials have already been certified, feedback from within the organization suggests there is a broad consensus on the potential benefits of expanding evaluation certification even further across the ILO. Ideally, if every official would become certified and manage at least one evaluation during their tenure<sup>51</sup>, this would benefit the whole organization, fostering a deeper evaluation culture.

However, there are challenges in the responsiveness and efficiency of the current system. Considering the growing volume of work, the limited number of full-time evaluation officers, and high transaction costs, the system leads, in some cases, to delays and inefficiencies in the management of DE. As mentioned in the ILO results-based evaluation strategy 2023-25, reliance on voluntary evaluation managers adds unpredictability to the system and is in essence a response to a structurally underfunded evaluation function<sup>52</sup>. In some cases, this has resulted in RMEOs or DEFPs or EVAL SEOs having to step in to manage or co-manage evaluations directly, which can increase their workload<sup>53</sup>. Limited capacity also reportedly presents challenges when managing joint evaluations, especially when the ILO leads the project, as it must reconcile the different evaluation guidelines of each participating organization, even though most elements of UN agencies are aligned under UNEG guidelines<sup>54</sup>.

### 3.2.2. Evaluation planning

Mandatory DE, whether independent or internal, are part of an integrated planning process maintained and overseen by EVAL in the i-eval discovery planned evaluation tab, based on funding agreements and approved programme and project documents and since 2023 ILO learning needs. Non-mandatory DE are planned by departments and regions<sup>55</sup>.

In 2023, the ILO introduced the Criteria-based Integrated Evaluation Planning System (CIEPS) to enhance strategic evaluation planning and the utilization of evaluation results. This follows the recommendations of a

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<sup>50</sup> Evaluation Manager Certification Programme ITCILO. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.itcilo.org/courses/evaluation-manager-certification-programme>

<sup>51</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>52</sup> ILO (2023a). ILO results-based evaluation strategy 2023-25. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/publications/ilo-results-based-evaluation-strategy-2023-25>

<sup>53</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>54</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>55</sup> ILO (2017), 29.



2022 Independent Evaluation of the ILO Evaluation Function<sup>56</sup>, which highlighted a need for better balancing between accountability and learning, pointing out an overload of evaluations with insufficient focus on learning outcomes, work overload for ILO staff and evaluation fatigue on the part of its constituents, as well as sub-optimal use of human and financial resources<sup>57</sup>.

To determine which evaluations are most important and essential, CIEPS considers the knowledge requirements and evidence gaps of regions and departments, going beyond the earlier “financial threshold-based system”, in favour of a non-mechanical process for selecting evaluations that can generate relevant evidence. The financial threshold for triggering evaluation requirements remains in place, but CIEPS adds criteria such as knowledge requirements and specific learning to determine necessity and timing of DE.

Regions and departments can request waivers based on justifying criteria, resulting in fewer but more strategic evaluations. For instance, projects with robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms may bypass an evaluability assessment, and those with an embedded M&E officer or high-quality external mid-term evaluations can forego certain internal evaluations<sup>58</sup>.

Through the CIEPS system, EVAL maintains a comprehensive map of all projects requiring evaluations and RMEOs are responsible for tracking key dates and timelines.

### **3.2.3. Financial resources**

The ILO Evaluation Policy indicates 2 per cent of total expenditures to be dedicated to evaluation purposes in Development Cooperation projects<sup>59</sup>. Moreover, EVAL recommends 3% of the total budget of a project to be allocated to project M&E (beyond project evaluations). Core budget funding for the core Evaluation Function is secured by EVAL, whereas RMEO are funded by regional offices and DEFP are posts funded by the Departments<sup>60</sup>. Funding for other evaluation activities such as synthesis review, meta-studies, corporate evaluations are funded separate from projects funding. The primary responsibility for resourcing project evaluations in project budgets lies with department and regional directors<sup>61</sup>. As these funds are tied to the project budgets, they generally expire with the project’s conclusion. This timing reportedly restricts the ILO’s capacity to perform impact-focused ex-post evaluations, which often necessitate a longer period to allow impacts to manifest and be properly assessed<sup>62</sup>.

Recognizing this challenge, the 2017 Evaluation Policy and the ILO results-based evaluation strategy 2023-25 advocate for a more adaptable funding modality to support evaluations that extend beyond standard project timelines<sup>63</sup>. Additionally, and following the Policy, EVAL has embraced the strategy of “clustering” evaluations by themes, programme frameworks, and locations where possible to reduce the number of evaluations<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> IOD-PARC (2022). Independent Evaluation of the ILO’s Evaluation Function for the Period 2017- 2021 Final Evaluation Report. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/publications/independent-evaluation-ilos-evaluation-function-period-2017-2021>

<sup>57</sup> ILO (2024b). Workflow 3.1 Implementation of the Criteria-Based Evaluation Planning System (CIEPS). Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/publications/workflow-31-implementation-criteria-based-evaluation-planning-system-cieps>

<sup>58</sup> A full list of waivers is available at ILO (2024), Figure 1.

<sup>59</sup> ILO (2017), 40.

<sup>60</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>61</sup> ILO (2017), 29.

<sup>62</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>63</sup> ILO (2017), 40.

<sup>64</sup> ILO (2023a), Output 2.1.1



To facilitate clustering and allow for flexibility, in 2023 EVAL has established the ILO Evaluation Trust Fund (IETF) to pool unused resources. The fund is specifically designed to support the evaluation of extra-budgetary development cooperation activities that require extended timelines, providing a financial buffer that allows for more strategic evaluation efforts<sup>65</sup>.

### 3.3. Quality controls

#### 3.3.1. Quality assurance

The ILO has a quality assurance system in place for its independent DE overseen by EVAL. The central evaluation office provides standards and guidance on evaluation procedures and methodologies, assures quality of reports meets international standards, monitors compliance with ILO evaluation policy, and approves independent evaluation reports on a real time basis. The system to ensure quality utilizes a layered approval process that engages multiple levels of evaluation stakeholders, including evaluation managers, DEFP, and RMEQ, ending with a final sign-off by EVAL senior evaluation officers<sup>66</sup>. This process is designed to ensure ongoing quality assurance throughout the DE lifecycle, with the aim to ensure the validity and credibility of evaluation findings.

The backbone of EVAL's "resource kit" is the ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation<sup>67</sup>, intended to provide a complete package of guidance for evaluation managers. The guidelines also include a vast number of guidance notes, tools, checklists, templates, protocols and workflows that are organized into five thematic pillars: Enabling conditions for good evaluations<sup>68</sup>; Types of evaluation<sup>69</sup>; Planning and designing evaluations<sup>70</sup>; Managing and conducting evaluations<sup>71</sup>; and Use and dissemination of evaluation findings<sup>72</sup>. A new "Evaluation Manager Certification Programme +" (EMCP+) is also under development for selected evaluation managers of more complex DE<sup>73</sup>. Additionally, an internal database, i-Track, is being developed to enable online management of most tasks for the DE process<sup>74</sup>.

#### 3.3.2. Quality assessment

Complementing the internal quality assurance mechanisms, the ILO employs an ex-post quality assessment system conducted by an external company to assess the quality of independent evaluation reports. This company, which is not involved in any other stages of the evaluation process to maintain independence and avoid potential conflicts of interest, conducts these reviews solely for ex-post quality assessment<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> ILO (2023b). The ILO Evaluation Trust Fund for enhanced organizational learning V5 23/08/2023. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/it/publications/evaluation-trust-fund>

<sup>66</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>67</sup> ILO (2020a), Table 1. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/ilo-evaluation-guidance>

<sup>68</sup> ILO (2020b). Evaluation guidance - Pillar 1: Enabling conditions for good evaluation. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/publications/evaluation-guidance-pillar-1-enabling-conditions-good-evaluation>

<sup>69</sup> ILO (2020c). Evaluation guidance - Pillar 2: Types of evaluation. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/publications/evaluation-guidance-pillar-2-types-evaluation>

<sup>70</sup> ILO (2020d). Evaluation guidance - Pillar 3: Planning & designing evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/publications/evaluation-guidance-pillar-3-planning-designing-evaluations>

<sup>71</sup> ILO (2020e). Evaluation guidance - Pillar 4: Managing and conducting evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/publications/evaluation-guidance-pillar-4-managing-and-conducting-evaluations>

<sup>72</sup> ILO (2020f). Evaluation guidance - Pillar 5: Use and dissemination of evaluation findings. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/publications/evaluation-guidance-pillar-5-use-and-dissemination-evaluation-findings>

<sup>73</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>74</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>75</sup> Source: KII.

Aggregated results from 2022 show that about 97 per cent of evaluation reports were rated “satisfactory” or “somewhat satisfactory”<sup>76</sup>. Feedback from internal sources highlights that one challenge to keeping quality is due to the excessive number of evaluations being overseen. It is hoped that the current state will be improved through the proposed clustering of multiple evaluations together and/or by reducing evaluations when unnecessary, such as in shorter projects or when accountability and learning needs are already covered by other project evaluations. Additionally, while raising the evaluation budget threshold could mitigate this issue, it might also adversely affect regions with smaller projects where fewer evaluations would be conducted under a higher threshold, contrasting with regions like Asia-Pacific and Africa, where larger projects naturally result in an overwhelming number of evaluations despite limited capacity<sup>77</sup>.

### 3.4. Ensuring impartiality and transparency

Impartiality in independent DE at ILO is mandated by the Evaluation Policy, requiring evaluation managers to be external from the intervention subject to evaluation. The policy also states that Reporting lines and responsibilities of staff involved in the DE network to ensure the highest possible level of impartiality of evaluations undertaken in the regions<sup>78</sup>.

EVAL has several safeguards to provide impartiality, including the use of external consultants as evaluators and regular stakeholder engagement. Evaluators are required to sign a Code of Conduct Agreement, affirming their commitment to operate impartially and without bias, ensuring a balanced assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation subject. They must also disclose in writing to the Evaluation Manager any prior experiences that could potentially lead to a conflict of interest<sup>79</sup>.

The ILO Evaluation Strategy also underscores the importance of participatory processes in evaluations. One of its strategic outputs aims to enhance ownership and accountability toward ultimate beneficiaries by favoring participatory approaches. A milestone set by the strategy is the development of DE guidance materials that incorporate participatory methods into their design, reinforcing EVAL’s commitment to transparency and stakeholder engagement<sup>80</sup>.

To ensure transparency, EVAL makes all ILO evaluation reports, along with their associated lessons learned, good practices, recommendations, and management responses, publicly accessible through the i-eval Discovery dashboard<sup>81</sup>.

### 3.5. Professional standards and capacity

The ILO results-based evaluation strategy 2023-25 emphasizes the need to improve evaluation capacities at the individual, organizational, and enabling environment levels. It aims to improve capacity for planning, undertaking, and utilizing evaluations effectively. The strategy also acknowledges the challenge posed by the

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<sup>76</sup> Universalia and ILO (2023). i-eval THINK Piece, No. 26 Results and reflections from a quality appraisal of ILO evaluations, 2022. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms\\_889735.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_889735.pdf)

<sup>77</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>78</sup> ILO (2017), 33.

<sup>79</sup> ILO (2018). ILO Code of Conduct: Agreement for Evaluators Updated October 2018. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_mas/@eval/documents/publication/wcms\\_649148.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_mas/@eval/documents/publication/wcms_649148.pdf)

<sup>80</sup> ILO (2023a), Output 2.2.1 Evaluations favour participatory approaches to improve ownership and accountability towards ultimate beneficiaries.

<sup>81</sup> i-eval Discovery. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#bqwws42>

increasing workload and the limited number of full-time evaluation officers, which often results in unpredictability due to reliance on voluntary evaluation managers. To mitigate this, EVAL aims to improve the capacities of its evaluation network through training, technical tools, skill-building, and increased recognition of evaluation-related roles and responsibilities<sup>82</sup>.

EVAL's efforts to enhance capacity of its evaluation managers include its regular training programmes, such as the EMCP<sup>83</sup> certification launched in 2013, its updated version EMCP+ (launched in 2024), alongside training tailored for ILO constituents on evaluating the Decent Work Agenda within the SDG context<sup>84</sup>. One reported challenge from internal sources is the ability to find available evaluation managers among ILO colleagues<sup>85</sup>. To mitigate this challenge, there is an ongoing effort to strengthen the incentive structure. In September 2023, EVAL introduced an internal electronic platform designed to streamline the assignment of upcoming evaluations to ILO evaluation managers based on their availability and interests. The platform also ensures that evaluation managers' contributions are recognized in the ILO's Performance Appraisal System through specific evaluation-related performance measures<sup>86</sup>.

Independent DE are conducted by external consultants, who are selected by evaluation managers with support from RMEO and DEFPs. The collaborative decision-making approach is reportedly designed in a way to ensure a comfortable atmosphere<sup>87</sup>. The type of support includes advertising TOR, providing evaluation managers with formats and templates, advice on shortlisted candidates, and provide reference checks if shortlisted candidates have previously worked with ILO evaluations. The selection process usually takes the form of calls for candidates, and direct selection at times. An internal roster of evaluation consultants is maintained, with performance feedback required via forms signed off by RMEO, DEFP, and senior evaluation officers.

Finding evaluation teams with both vertical and evaluation expertise has reportedly been cited as a challenge<sup>88</sup>. To familiarize evaluation consultants with ILO, EVAL has a self-induction programme for evaluators that provides an overview of the ILO's normative framework, its evaluation policy, strategies, and practices<sup>89</sup>. This programme, while optional, is recommended for consultants wishing to engage with the ILO on evaluation projects. To streamline the identification of suitable evaluation teams, EVAL has long-term agreements (LTA) with about 20 consultancy companies.

## 3.6. Utility, use, and follow-up

### 3.6.1. Use of evaluation findings

Feedback from internal sources indicates that the importance of DE within the ILO is acknowledged across the organization<sup>90</sup>. Programme management reportedly recognizes the value of evaluations for providing

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<sup>82</sup> ILO (2023a), Sub-Outcome 1.2. Enhanced evaluation capacity further strengthens evaluation function to implement its programme of evaluations.

<sup>83</sup> Evaluation Manager Certification Programme (EMCP). Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_mas/@eval/documents/publication/wcms\\_208474.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_mas/@eval/documents/publication/wcms_208474.pdf)

<sup>84</sup> Training Programme for the ILO Constituents on Evaluating the Decent Work Agenda in the SDG Era. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms\\_616381.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_616381.pdf)

<sup>85</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>86</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>87</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>88</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>89</sup> Self-induction programme for evaluation consultants. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms\\_677042.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_677042.pdf)

<sup>90</sup> Source: KII.

evidence-based insights into programme. Often, the impetus for these evaluations comes from donors, whose demands for high-quality evaluations can influence programme extensions. This external push enhances the internal visibility and perceived importance of evaluation findings<sup>91</sup>.

The Evaluation Policy and Strategy emphasize the importance of using evaluation findings to inform and improve organizational practices through a participatory process<sup>92</sup>. The Evaluation Strategy commits to expand the knowledge base from evaluations to enhance organizational effectiveness through a dedicated Strategic Outcome. By improving accessibility to evaluation results through various knowledge products and communication products – including synthesis reviews<sup>93</sup>, think pieces<sup>94</sup>, quick facts<sup>95</sup> - EVAL aims to make evaluation findings more actionable and user-friendly, supporting better strategic planning and decision-making across the organization<sup>96</sup>.

Ensuring the application of evaluation findings and following up on recommendations represent ongoing challenges. Stakeholders may view evaluations more as tools for accountability rather than learning, seeing recommendations sometimes being too operational rather than strategic<sup>97</sup>. The large volume of evaluations stretches the function thin, impacting the strategic utility and learning of evaluations<sup>98</sup>. To address these issues, EVAL is focusing on synthesizing evaluations and clustering them to reduce redundancy and improve the strategic impact of evaluation insights. The use of the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC) that is headed by the ILO Deputy Director General and integrated by the nine ILO Assistants Director General representatives (HQ and Regions) as well as targeted outreach activities, such as regional and global presentations and specialized publications, also aim to enhance the external use of evaluation data beyond the organization. Furthermore, EVAL is considering future implications of innovative solutions, such as the potential use of AI, to streamline the identification of lessons learned<sup>99</sup>.

### **3.6.2. Management response**

The Evaluation Policy mandates that all evaluations, whether centralized or decentralized, must have a management response, with systematic tracking and analysis of the implementation of these responses<sup>100</sup>. To streamline this process, EVAL has an automated management response system (AMRS) that helps following up on recommendations from independent DE<sup>101</sup>, which reportedly works well<sup>102</sup>. The AMRS incorporates data visualization tools, clarifies reporting lines and provides real time status updates. Responsibility for tracking management response lies with programme countries. The system is automated, sent by EVAL to the

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<sup>91</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>92</sup> ILO (2017), 42.

<sup>93</sup> Synthesis reviews and meta-analyses. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/about-ilo/how-ilo-works/accountability-and-transparency/evaluation-office/synthesis-reviews-and-meta-analyses>

<sup>94</sup> Newsletter and Think Pieces. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/about-ilo/how-ilo-works/accountability-and-transparency/evaluation-office/newsletter-and-think-pieces>

<sup>95</sup> An example of a Quick Fact sheet is available at [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/QF\\_HLE%20DC%202024\\_web.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/QF_HLE%20DC%202024_web.pdf)

<sup>96</sup> ILO (2023a), Strategy Outcome 3: (utility and use); Sub-outcome 3.1. ILO's evaluation dashboard (i-eval discovery) is revamped with improved functionality and use; Sub-outcome 3.2. Better targeted knowledge and communication products strengthens their potential use and integration in ILO's knowledge base; Sub-Outcome 3.3. Improved tracking of uptake and use by Constituents and management of the knowledge and lessons generated from evaluations for governance and decision-making.

<sup>97</sup> Source: KII

<sup>98</sup> ILO (2023a), Strategy Outcome 3: (utility and use).

<sup>99</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>100</sup> ILO (2017), 42.

<sup>101</sup> Evaluation Office Brochure – What we do. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ilo.org/about-ilo/how-ilo-works/accountability-and-transparency/evaluation-office#what-we-do>

<sup>102</sup> Source: KII.

relevant country office director, who then delegates follow-up tasks. Summary statistics are published in the annual evaluation report, showing implementation rates<sup>103</sup>.

## 4. IOM

### 4.1. DE architecture and its enabling environment

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) delineates its DE architecture through the 2018 Evaluation Policy<sup>104</sup> and the 2021 Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines<sup>105</sup>. This framework defines DE as evaluations “commissioned and managed outside the IOM central evaluation office (OIG/Evaluation) – by Headquarters Departments, Regional Offices and Country Offices – focusing on activities, themes, operational areas, policies, strategies, and projects falling under their respective areas of work”<sup>106</sup>. DE are designed to encompass projects and programmes, or operational areas at various levels, including global, regional, and country level, and they can also focus on thematic areas and strategies of national or regional importance<sup>107</sup>.

Governance of DE within IOM emphasizes strong senior management engagement to foster an evaluative culture and ensure adherence to norms and standards. At the HQ level, the central evaluation office (OIG/Evaluation) oversees the execution of centralized evaluations but also enhances the organization’s evaluation capacity through normative guidance, training, and technical support.

At the regional level, P4-level Regional Monitoring, Evaluation and Risk Management Officers (ROMERO) play a role in supporting the preparation and conduct of DE, ensuring that they align with policy requirements, and facilitating capacity-building initiatives. Reporting directly to the Regional Director and work functionally with the OIG/Evaluation, ROMERO have a broad role that encompasses evaluation and monitoring tasks. As part of a structural reform in September 2024, the responsibility for risk management was removed from the ROMERO<sup>108</sup>. Their evaluation-related responsibilities include assisting in drafting TOR, selecting evaluators, and preparing evaluation reports and management responses<sup>109</sup>.

### 4.2. Responsibilities for the DE function

#### 4.2.1. Management arrangements

Management arrangements for DE at IOM are detailed within the organization’s M&E Guidelines, which define key roles in the evaluation process. The DE commissioner -potentially an IOM programme manager, Chief of Mission, thematic specialist, or unit from headquarters or regional/country offices, a donor, or a combination thereof - initiates the evaluation. The DE manager, often a programme or project manager within IOM, is in charge of the evaluation process. The DE manager may be from the commissioning entity itself.

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<sup>103</sup> ILO (2024a), 3.2.4.

<sup>104</sup> IOM (2018). IOM Evaluation Policy. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://evaluation.iom.int/guiding-documents>

<sup>105</sup> IOM (2021a). IOM M&E Guidelines. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://evaluation.iom.int/technical-reference>

<sup>106</sup> IOM (2018), The Decentralized Evaluation Approach (p.4).

<sup>107</sup> IOM (2018), The Decentralized Evaluation Approach (p.5).

<sup>108</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>109</sup> From the TOR of a Regional Monitoring, Evaluation and Risk Management Officer (ROMERO). Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://recruit.iom.int/sap\(bD1lbiZjPTEwMA==\)/bc/bsp/sap/hrrcf\\_wd\\_dovru/application.do?PARAM=cmNmdHlwZl1waW5zdCZwaW5zdD0wMDBEM0FBOTk3REMxRURFOEVGRkIyREVBNUYxOzEyOQ%3d%3d](https://recruit.iom.int/sap(bD1lbiZjPTEwMA==)/bc/bsp/sap/hrrcf_wd_dovru/application.do?PARAM=cmNmdHlwZl1waW5zdCZwaW5zdD0wMDBEM0FBOTk3REMxRURFOEVGRkIyREVBNUYxOzEyOQ%3d%3d)



Sometimes, an evaluation management committee may be formed, comprising multiple stakeholders to collaboratively oversee the evaluation activities<sup>110</sup>.

In practice, the role of the DE manager at IOM is highly context-dependent, influenced by the specific office structure and the resources available. The position may be filled by M&E officers, project managers, or other appointed staff, while OIG/Evaluation encourages as much independence as possible in line with IOM's policy. This flexibility is due to the organizational structure at each office which is heavily influenced by project-specific funding. While larger offices might have a project support unit handling M&E and reporting, this setup is less common in smaller offices, where resource availability can vary significantly<sup>111</sup>.

DE are generally undertaken by external independent evaluators not involved in the design, implementation or management of the subject under evaluation. Notably, some DE can be undertaken by IOM staff as internal evaluators if they have no relationship with the subject being evaluated<sup>112</sup>.

#### **4.2.2. Evaluation planning**

Planning for DE at IOM is a systematic process governed by established coverage norms and criteria for selecting evaluation subjects, facilitated by OIG/Evaluation in collaboration with the ROMERO. The first step of DE planning happens during project development, with the IOM Project Handbook requiring that all proposals consider the inclusion of an evaluation within the project<sup>113</sup>.

Project developers are expected to provide minimum information on planned evaluations when creating project proposal in Project Information and Management Application (PRIMA) platform. The information requested while completing the evaluation module includes whether an evaluation is planned, including a justification if no evaluation is planned; the purpose of the evaluation (intended use and users); the type (by time and who conducts the evaluation); suggested criteria to be addressed by the evaluation; and the proposed methodology<sup>114</sup>.

Based on the evaluation provisions recorded in PRIMA, OIG/Evaluation and ROMERO then develop regional evaluation plans for project and programme DE. Evaluations are mandated for any project with a budget exceeding USD 1.2 million, including those that reach this threshold through extensions or additional phases. For projects below this financial marker, evaluations are encouraged if they offer potential value, such as opportunities for extension, replication, or strategic repositioning within innovative areas<sup>115</sup>.

IOM operates on a “projectized” basis, without dedicated country budgets like other agencies. While some larger country offices occasionally evaluate their strategies, this is an exception rather than the norm. Regional offices are not mandated to evaluate their strategies, although reportedly shifting policy may indicate more future-oriented evaluations<sup>116</sup>.

#### **4.2.3. Financial resources**

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<sup>110</sup> IOM (2021a), 5.1.1. Roles in evaluation.

<sup>111</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>112</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>113</sup> IOM (2017). IOM Project Handbook Second Edition. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://ctic.iom.int/en/resources/iom-project-handbook-second-edition>

<sup>114</sup> IOM (2021a), 5.2. Planning for evaluation.

<sup>115</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>116</sup> Source: KII.

Financial planning for DE is guided by recommended practices but remains flexible, reflecting the diversity of projects. IOM’s project-based nature, without dedicated country budgets, compels each office to fundraise independently for their projects and hence for DE<sup>117</sup>.

The Evaluation Policy mentions between 5 to 10 percent of a project’s budget to monitoring and evaluation, with 2 to 4 percent specifically earmarked for evaluation activities. This funding primarily covers consultancy services for conducting evaluations. While the guidelines are indicative, the actual allocation can vary significantly—from as little as USD 3,000 for DE conducted internally, to USD 30,000 and can easily increase for more complex evaluations which may involve negotiations with donors for additional funding.<sup>118</sup> At the project level, evaluation budgeting is integrated into financial planning through the PRIMA system, ensuring that funds are set aside early in the project lifecycle<sup>119</sup>.

Feedback from internal sources indicates that mobilizing the necessary financial and human resources for DE may pose challenges. Regional offices often seek external funding to conduct or participate in DE<sup>120</sup>. Budget constraints significantly impact operational flexibility of DE across IOM due to strict adherence to project-specific funding agreements. Even when multiple DE cover similar topics, resources from completed projects cannot be transferred to ongoing ones. This limitation reportedly restricts the efficient use of available funds. Some funding for DE may come from the IOM Development Fund<sup>121</sup>.

### 4.3. Quality controls

#### 4.3.1. Quality assurance

The Multilateral Organization Performance Network (MOPAN) assessment of IOM, published in 2019, highlighted that quality assurance systems were lacking<sup>122</sup>. Following up, IOM commissioned a Meta-Evaluation of IOM’s internal and external evaluations 2017-2019 assessing the overall quality of evaluations in IOM, which established quality criteria that are still in use<sup>123</sup>. Then in 2021, a UNEG/OECD-DAC Peer Review of the IOM evaluation function provided a series of recommendations as to how evaluation quality in IOM can be improved, including (a) introducing a quality assurance system for centralized and DE, (b) introducing an external post-hoc quality assessment of all evaluations, and (c) encouraging the use of evaluation reference groups<sup>124</sup>. To follow up on these recommendations, a Feasibility Study on Quality Management Mechanism was commissioned, including a review of systems in other UN agencies and a new sample of evaluation reports. The study emphasized the need for a checklist to review the quality of TOR by the evaluation manager, and tools for the quality control during different phases of the evaluation. It also

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<sup>117</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>118</sup> IOM (2021a), 2.2.3. Budgeting for monitoring, as well as for evaluation.

<sup>119</sup> IOM (2021a), 5.2. Planning for evaluation.

<sup>120</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>121</sup> IOM Development Fund. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.iom.int/iom-development-fund>

<sup>122</sup> Multilateral Organization Performance Network (MOPAN) (2019). MOPAN 2017-18 Assessments International Organization for Migration (IOM). Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/iom2017-18/IOM%20Report.pdf>

<sup>123</sup> Artival (2020). Final Report. Meta-Evaluation of IOM’s internal and external evaluations (2017 – 2019). Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://evaluation.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1151/files/docs/resources/Artival\\_IOM%20Meta%20evaluation%20report%20FINAL\\_0.pdf](https://evaluation.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1151/files/docs/resources/Artival_IOM%20Meta%20evaluation%20report%20FINAL_0.pdf)

<sup>124</sup> UNEG/OECD (2021). UNEG/OECD PEER Review of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Evaluation Function. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://evaluation.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1151/files/documents/IOM%20UNEG%20Peer%20Review%20Report%20final%2017\\_05\\_21.pdf](https://evaluation.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1151/files/documents/IOM%20UNEG%20Peer%20Review%20Report%20final%2017_05_21.pdf)

recommended additional quality review by ROMERO and an annual independent review of selected evaluations<sup>125</sup>.

In line with these recommendations, the Guidance on Quality Management, launched in 2022 by OIG/Evaluation, introduced a framework for evaluation quality control. The guidance emphasizes the establishment of robust quality assurance and control mechanisms for both centralized and DE<sup>126</sup>. This framework outlines roles, responsibilities, and processes to ensure high-quality evaluations, as well as the use of tools for all stages of evaluation, including checklists for reviewing TOR by DE managers<sup>127</sup> and mandatory quality controls for reviewing inception reports<sup>128</sup> and evaluation reports<sup>129</sup> by both evaluators and DE managers.

### **4.3.2. Quality assessment**

As outlined in the 2022 Guidance on Quality Management, OIG/Evaluation aims for the formal establishment of regular meta-evaluations, summarizing findings of multiple evaluations, to judge the quality, value and significance of evaluations in IOM and the progress in the implementation of quality control mechanisms<sup>130</sup>. As part of this process, in 2024, OIG/Evaluation has launched a request for proposal (RFP) for the Provision of Services for Conducting Meta-Evaluation of IOM's Evaluations (2020–2024)<sup>131</sup>.

## **4.4. Ensuring impartiality and transparency**

Impartiality in DE at IOM is maintained to align with UNEG Norms & Standards and ethical guidelines. The Evaluation Policy underscores the importance of objectivity, professional integrity, and the absence of bias throughout the evaluation process<sup>132</sup>. Specifically, DE managers are expected to have no prior involvement in the development, design, or management of the evaluation subject, although this is not always the case. In cases where staffing constraints make this separation unfeasible, ROMERO are tasked with ensuring impartiality during the review of the TOR and the drafting of reports. External evaluators shall not have any previous engagement with the evaluation subject. Additionally, the formation of a management or Reference Group is recommended to oversee the evaluation process. The M&E Guidelines emphasize the importance of participatory approaches in DE<sup>133</sup>.

To ensure transparency, all final DE reports are accessible on the IOM Evaluation website<sup>134</sup>. Reports are accompanied by an evaluation brief and the management response upon completion. Internally, evaluations are cataloged in PRIMA and the IOM Monitoring and Evaluation Portal. For broader visibility, evaluation reports can also be shared on IOM country or departmental websites and relevant project or programme pages<sup>135</sup>. The Annual Evaluation Report presents an overview of DE conducted in the year. In 2023, 44 DE

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<sup>125</sup> IOD PARC (2022). Feasibility Study on Quality Management Mechanism Final Report. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://evaluation.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1151/files/docs/resources/IOM%20QA%20Feasibility%20Report\\_Final%20%28003%29.pdf](https://evaluation.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1151/files/docs/resources/IOM%20QA%20Feasibility%20Report_Final%20%28003%29.pdf)

<sup>126</sup> IOM (2022). Guidance on Quality Management of IOM Evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://evaluation.iom.int/technical-reference>

<sup>127</sup> Checklists – Terms of Reference. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://evaluation.iom.int/technical-reference>

<sup>128</sup> Quality Control Tool – Inception Reports. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://evaluation.iom.int/technical-reference>

<sup>129</sup> Quality Control Tool – Evaluation Reports. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://evaluation.iom.int/technical-reference>

<sup>130</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>131</sup> Request for Proposal (RFP) Provision of Services for Conducting Meta-Evaluation of IOM's Evaluations (2020 – 2024) RFP Reference No: EVA-2024-05. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/annex\\_22\\_tmp\\_request-for-proposal\\_final.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/annex_22_tmp_request-for-proposal_final.pdf)

<sup>132</sup> IOM (2018), Norms and Standards for Evaluation (p.6).

<sup>133</sup> IOM (2021a), 5.1.1. Roles in Evaluation.

<sup>134</sup> IOM Evaluation Repository. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://evaluation.iom.int/evaluation-search-pdf>

<sup>135</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.



were published to the evaluation repository and PRIMA, of which 28 final evaluations, 13 ex-post evaluations, two mid-term evaluations, and one real-time evaluation<sup>136</sup>.

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<sup>136</sup> IOM (2024). Annual Evaluation Report 2023. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://evaluation.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1151/files/documents/Annual%20Evaluation%20Report%202023.pdf>

## 4.5. Professional standards and capacity

At the regional level, OIG/Evaluation counts with a network of ROMERO. These P4-level positions require extensive experience in evaluation, in addition to project development, monitoring, and reporting<sup>137</sup>. To ensure professionalism among evaluators, the recruitment of evaluation teams adheres to IOM's procurement processes, ensuring the selection of evaluators with the required expertise. This involves a rating of technical proposals and the utilization of internal rosters that highlight performance metrics, including underperformance. ROMERO may support the recruitment process, though typically, the evaluation commissioner coordinates this with IOM's resource management officers and procurement staff.

IOM provides several activities aimed at developing evaluation capacity among DE managers and supporting stakeholders. IOM has developed online training initiatives for both internal and external stakeholders<sup>138</sup>. Capacity building activities are also conducted at the regional level under the guidance of ROMERO. OIG/Evaluation also offers guidance materials, including the Guidance for Evaluation Managers<sup>139</sup> and the Guidance for Evaluators<sup>140</sup>. Reportedly, capacity building remains a significant challenge in DE processes due to the difficulty of integrating training and professional development into the existing workloads of DE managers and technical specialists, who often find it hard to allocate time for these activities<sup>141</sup>. Additionally, the rotation policy impacts capacity building efforts, as DE managers can transition to different positions. This movement means that many staff members may lack the necessary background and continuity needed to develop deep evaluation expertise<sup>142</sup>.

## 4.6. Utility, use, and follow-up

### 4.6.1. Use of evaluation findings

A 2021 study on the use of evaluation at IOM identified several areas of improvement in strengthening the evaluation culture and mechanisms for using evaluations effectively. It found that while IOM follows a robust evaluation practice, it lacked robust mechanisms to ensure evaluations inform policy and strategy, and to aggregate findings for decision-making. It recommended to enhance knowledge management and make better use of evaluation outcomes<sup>143</sup>.

Building on the findings, the "Guidance on the Use of Evaluations and Follow-up of Evaluation Recommendations" issued by OIG/Evaluation in 2022 provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing the utility and application of evaluations, including DE, within IOM. It aims to ensure evaluations are effectively used for decision-making, accountability, learning, performance improvement, and promoting IOM's work. To ensure that evaluations reach the right audiences, strategies in place include the publication and dissemination through IOM's evaluation repository, including the use of evaluation briefs<sup>144</sup>, as well as the development of communication strategies to ensure findings are shared with relevant stakeholders.

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<sup>137</sup> From the TOR of a Regional Monitoring & Evaluation and Risk Management Officer (ROMERO). Retrieved December 4, 2024, from

[https://recruit.iom.int/sap\(bD11biZjPTEwMA==\)/bc/bsp/sap/hrrcf\\_wd\\_dovru/application.do?PARAM=cmNmdHlwZ\\_T1waW5zdCZwaW5zdD0wMDBEM0FBOTk3REMxRURFOEVGRkIyREVBNUYxOzEyOQ%3d%3d](https://recruit.iom.int/sap(bD11biZjPTEwMA==)/bc/bsp/sap/hrrcf_wd_dovru/application.do?PARAM=cmNmdHlwZ_T1waW5zdCZwaW5zdD0wMDBEM0FBOTk3REMxRURFOEVGRkIyREVBNUYxOzEyOQ%3d%3d)

<sup>138</sup> IOM E-Campus. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ecampus.iom.int/>

<sup>139</sup> Guidance for Evaluation Managers. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://evaluation.iom.int/technical-reference>

<sup>140</sup> Guidance for Evaluators. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://evaluation.iom.int/technical-reference>

<sup>141</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>142</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>143</sup> IOM (2021b). Study on the Use of Evaluation at IOM and Proposals for Evaluation Follow-up Mechanisms. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://evaluation.iom.int/technical-reference>

<sup>144</sup> Evaluation Brief Guidance. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://evaluation.iom.int/technical-reference>

OIG/Evaluation encourages the conduct of evaluation syntheses to further promote the use of DE and as lessons learning initiatives.

#### **4.6.2. Management response**

Management responses and follow-up processes are required for all evaluations, helping to adapt policies and strategies based on evaluation insights. The 2022 guidance mandates publication of management response in the evaluation repository upon finalization. Managed through PRIMA, the management process is detailed through documentation and action plans that are publicly recorded. The guidance emphasizes the importance of timely implementation and transparency. The process is overseen by ROMERO and OIG/Evaluation, which also reports on the system's effectiveness and recommendation follow-ups<sup>145</sup>.

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<sup>145</sup> IOM (2021b), 5. Management response and follow-up on the use of evaluation findings and implementation of recommendations.

## 5. UNDP

### 5.1. DE architecture and its enabling environment

UNDP's evaluation architecture and roles and responsibilities within the UNDP institutional framework is defined and guided by its Evaluation Policy<sup>146</sup>. Decentralized evaluations (DE) in UNDP refer to those commissioned by UNDP programme units, including policy and regional bureaux, and country offices<sup>147</sup>. These evaluations, which can encompass project, portfolio, outcome, thematic, and country and regional programme evaluations<sup>148</sup>, are distinct from those carried out by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), reflecting what the 2019 Evaluation Policy refers to as a “bifurcated evaluation system”<sup>149</sup>. Enhancing the quality and utilization of decentralized evaluations has been a recurring topic in the reviews of the Evaluation Policy<sup>150</sup>.

The DE function is aligned with the organization's broader goals of capturing lessons for future programming and ensuring accountability<sup>151</sup>. There are clear linkages between DE function of programme units and other parts of the organization, as the responsibilities are divided between country offices, regional bureaux, and HQ, while IEO performs a supporting role, as outlined in the Policy<sup>152</sup>. The IEO, as the central evaluation unit, provides several types of support, including setting evaluation standards and guidelines, managing the quality assessment of decentralized evaluations, monitoring compliance of evaluation standards, offering evaluation training, and sharing lessons. The status of the implementation of UNDP's DEs is reported annually by the IEO to the Executive Board as part of its annual report on evaluation<sup>153</sup>.

### 5.2. Responsibilities for the DE function

#### 5.2.1. Management arrangements

The DE function in UNDP has been described as broadly involving key actors<sup>154</sup>: programme units, especially country offices (COs); Regional Bureaux; Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS), and the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), each playing a distinct role. Country offices (COs) develop their evaluation plans following the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines and commission decentralized evaluations accordingly. The evaluations are to be carried out by independent external consultants. The conduct of the decentralized evaluations follows the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines and are usually managed by the programme units' M&E focal points. With the delegation from the administrator<sup>155</sup>, the Bureau for Policy and Programme (BPPS) advises the five Regional Bureaux and Regional Focal Points (RFPs) on the Decentralized

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<sup>146</sup> UNDP has conducted a series of Evaluation Policy reviews and revisions, commencing with the 1st UNDP Evaluation Policy in 2006, revised in 2011, 2016, and 2019. Each subsequent revision has followed an external consultant-led review of the Policy. Another Evaluation Policy Review took place in 2024 and will be presented to the UNDP Executive Board in 2025.

<sup>147</sup> The UNDP Evaluation Policy sets out the purpose and basic principles of evaluation for UNDP, as well as UNDP associated funds and programmes UNCDF and UNV.

<sup>148</sup> A full list of types of decentralized evaluations is available at UNDP (2021). Evaluation Guidelines. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://erc.undp.org/methods-center/guidelines>

<sup>149</sup> UNDP (2019). *UNDP Evaluation Policy* (DP/2019/29), 35. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/policy/2019/DP\\_2019\\_29\\_E.pdf](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/policy/2019/DP_2019_29_E.pdf).

<sup>150</sup> Independent Review of the UNDP Evaluation Policy, October 2024.

<sup>151</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>152</sup> UNDP (2019), 42.

<sup>153</sup> UNDP (2019), 59.

<sup>154</sup> UNDP (2019), 37-39.

Evaluation function for UNDP<sup>156</sup>. Additionally, within BPPS, a key role involves guiding bureaus, regional, and country offices in implementing evaluation guidelines, with a designated evaluation focal point overseeing this process. BPPS also ensures corporate compliance, maintaining UNDP's commitments to DE, and provide guidance to UNDP units on the use of evaluation findings and lessons to improve organizational decision-making, accountability, and learning. It also monitors implementation of the management responses to independent and decentralized evaluations in UNDP. Additionally, BPPS keeps evaluation on senior management's agenda, reporting on decentralized evaluations to the Executive Board and monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) that are regularly shared with senior management<sup>157</sup>.

The IEO, in addition to conducting independent evaluations, plays a role in setting the standards, guidelines, and frameworks for conducting all evaluations in UNDP. It ensures that evaluations uphold UNEG Norms and Standards such as independence and impartiality. The IEO also provides support to M&E capacity development at the regional and country level.<sup>158</sup> It developed online training courses on evaluation for UNDP M&E focal points and other personnel. Since 2024, the IEO counts with a number of P5-level Regional Evaluation Advisers (REAs). While posted in regional offices, REAs work with Regional Bureaux to strengthen DE capacity and provide technical support and guidance to decentralized evaluations as needed<sup>159</sup>. IEO also manages independent quality assessment for UNDP decentralized evaluations. The UNDP Evaluation Resource Center (ERC), managed by the IEO, provides features including monitoring the implementation of evaluation plan and management response, as well as the quality of decentralized evaluations.

### **5.2.2. Evaluation planning**

Decentralized evaluations are commissioned by programme units (such as policy or regional bureaux, or country offices) through evaluation plans that accompany relevant programme documents – such as country, regional and global programme documents<sup>160</sup>.

Specifically, programme units present a timed and fully costed evaluation plan to the Executive Board as annexes of the programme document considered for approval<sup>161</sup>. Typically, it is the programme unit senior management that leads planning, while the programme unit M&E focal point coordinates with programme teams and other stakeholders in the development of the plan, following the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines<sup>162</sup>. Regional bureaux evaluation focal points are also be included in the review of draft country-level evaluation plans<sup>163</sup>. Plans should include evaluations of different types (project, programme, outcome, etc.). The plans are approved together with the country programme documents (CPD).

The evaluation plans and decentralized evaluations will be uploaded in the UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC) by the programme units and approved and posted by the regional bureaux. Evaluation plans and decentralized evaluations are publicly available online at the UNDP ERC<sup>164</sup>. Plans are flexible to changing conditions, for example unforeseen events, or changing demands and there is a strategy for doing so. They are

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<sup>156</sup> UNDP Evaluation Guidelines, [Section Five: Roles and Responsibilities in Decentralised Evaluation](#)

<sup>157</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>158</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>159</sup> From the Terms of Reference of Regional Evaluation Advisers. As of December 2024, REAs are present in Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific, Regional Bureau for Africa and Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

<sup>160</sup> UNDP (2019), 38.

<sup>161</sup> UNDP Evaluation Plan Template. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://erc.undp.org/methods-center/templates> .

<sup>162</sup> UNDP M&E focal point roles and responsibilities Task Sheet. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://erc.undp.org/methods-center/templates> .

<sup>163</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>164</sup> UNDP IEO Evaluation Resource Center. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://erc.undp.org/>

reviewed annually and refined and adjusted as needed. Regional M&E focal points can approve changes to the evaluation plans if proper justifications are provided by programme units<sup>165</sup>.

### **5.2.3. Financial resources**

At the overall level, UNDP Evaluation Policy establishes a budget benchmark for evaluation, separate from monitoring resources (financial and human). Under the policy, 1 percent of UNDP's programmatic (core and non-core) budget is allocated for evaluation, which includes 0.3 percent for IEO and 0.7 percent for programme units<sup>166</sup>. The IEO Annual Report on Evaluation gives analysis on decentralized evaluation expenditures<sup>167</sup>. Programme units estimate and indicate financial requirements and financing sources for each evaluation in the evaluation plan

## **5.3. Quality controls**

### **5.3.1. Quality assurance**

The Evaluation Policy defers to the UNDP evaluation guidelines for the quality assurance, which contain templates and expected evaluation approaches, timescales and structures. M&E structures and capacities across programme units vary, with full- or part-time focal points (FPs)/officers bringing diverse backgrounds from M&E to Results-Based Management (RBM). Many M&E focal points often handle multiple roles and responsibilities in the programme units. All FPs are required to take the IEO developed online course on evaluation to be familiar with foundational knowledge on evaluation. When additional support is needed, FPs can request assistance from the regional bureaux. CO should call on regional M&E focal points for support when required when drafting TORs and reviewing/ approving evaluation reports. When uploaded to the ERC, the regional M&E focal point is expected to review TORs and final reports and provide feedback. From IEO, the new REAs are also expected to provide support to decentralized evaluations as needed. IEO resources - such as templates, guidelines, trainings - are credited as vital for supporting quality evaluations and promoting effective practices<sup>168</sup>. Some RBx offer new initiatives for quality assurance.

As suggested in the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines, other controls to ensure quality of evaluation include the use of a reference group, which includes key stakeholders. This group where present is explicitly required in TORs to ensure comprehensive input from partners. Additionally, an audit trail is maintained to uphold transparency and traceability throughout the evaluation process<sup>169</sup>.

### **5.3.2. Quality assessment**

The IEO runs a system of quality assessment of decentralized evaluations and reports to the UNDP Executive Board. This process, applied across UNDP, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), and United Nations Volunteers (UNV), evaluates the TORs of the evaluations, report design, methodology, cross-cutting issues such as gender, findings, evidence robustness, and recommendations using specific parameters and rating systems. The assessment follows key steps: evaluation reports are uploaded by programme units to the Evaluation Resource Center (ERC). Reports are then reviewed by the independent reviewers recruited and managed by the IEO, and the QA ratings and comments uploaded through the ERC. A pool of expert QA

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<sup>165</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>166</sup> UNDP (2019), 42.

<sup>167</sup> UNDP (2023). Evaluation - Annual Report. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/annual-report/are.shtml>

<sup>168</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>169</sup> Source: KII.

reviewers is contracted by the IEO to ensure the quality and consistency of assessments. The assessment is undertaken quarterly, and at peak times monthly. IEO reports on the results of the QA process through its annual report on evaluation<sup>170</sup>. The QA results are available to UNDP personnel.

## 5.4. Ensuring impartiality and transparency

The evaluation policy states that “UNDP management shall take all necessary actions to ensure the objectivity and impartiality of the process and persons hired”<sup>171</sup>. Detailed guidance on impartiality considerations is provided in the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines. The extent to which UNDP is promoting impartiality and transparency in its decentralized evaluation can be judged using a number of elements, including the use of consultants to provide impartial exercise, periodic meetings with stakeholders, the optional use of reference groups<sup>172</sup>, and audit trails. Programme units need to ensure the independence and impartiality of evaluators, and that they are free from conflicts of interest<sup>173</sup><sup>174</sup>. Evaluators are required to sign UNEG’s Pledge of Commitment to Ethical Conduct in Evaluation<sup>175</sup>. Dispute resolution mechanisms also include an audit trail, which provides an avenue to highlight issues with an evaluation, and for the evaluator to provide further evidence to support their findings. If there is a continued disagreement, then either UNDP or the evaluation team can address their concerns to the Deputy Director of the regional bureau where the evaluation is being undertaken, including the IEO in their correspondence. Finally, all evaluation reports are posted online in the ERC, which is a publicly available evaluation database. Evaluation quality assessments are available for UNDP staff on the ERC upon login.

## 5.5. Professional standards and capacity

The evaluation capacity of UNDP staff responsible for managing decentralized evaluations can vary. To ensure professionalism, UNDP develops their capacity through a series of initiatives. Since 2020 two online training courses are available. One is required and certified and is targeted at M&E focal points (and others) directly involved in DE implementation. The other is shorter and non-mandatory introductory course to evaluation for all UNDP staff<sup>176</sup>. IEO also supports in person training of all UNDP CO M&E focal points and other staff in collaboration with regional bureaus, as well as a series of Webinars. The ERC has a dedicated Methods Center<sup>177</sup> that provides users with a detailed guide to multiple methodological approaches to data collection and analysis. UNDP Regional Bureaus also run webinars on evaluation planning and implementation as well as other training as a part of their regional bureau DE strategies, sometimes with support from IEO and BPPS<sup>178</sup>.

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<sup>170</sup> UNDP (2021).

<sup>171</sup> UNDP (2019), 38.

<sup>172</sup> Evaluation reference groups perform an advisory role throughout the evaluation process. They can include project stakeholders, government partners, donors, as well as subjects with thematic and evaluation expertise. From UNDP (2021).

<sup>173</sup> The standard UNDP Evaluation TOR explicitly demands for “evaluators’ independence from any organizations that have been involved in designing, executing, or advising any aspect of the intervention that is the subject of the evaluation”. Source: UNDP Evaluation TOR Template. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://erc.undp.org/methods-center/templates>.

<sup>174</sup> UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPP). Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://popp.undp.org/procurement>

<sup>175</sup> UNEG (2020). Pledge of Commitment to Ethical Conduct in Evaluation. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866>

<sup>176</sup> UNDP (2020). Annual report on evaluation 2020. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/annual-report/are-2020.shtml>

<sup>177</sup> IEO Methods Center. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://erc.undp.org/methods-center>

<sup>178</sup> Source: KII.



IEO Regional evaluation advisers are hired at P5 level. Their required expertise includes at least 10 years of experience in conducting or managing evaluation, strengthening country-led monitoring and evaluation systems, as well as in evaluation methodologies, approaches, designs and capacity building<sup>179</sup>.

Decentralized evaluations are conducted by external evaluators. To ensure they meet the levels of thematic and professional expertise required, UNDP has a centralized GPN Express Roster of evaluators to support the identification of evaluators. The Global Policy Network (GPN) Express roster also includes a list of evaluators vetted by the Independent Evaluation Office. In 2024, the IEO has launched a dedicated call for independent evaluators<sup>180</sup>. The ERC can also be searched internally at the evaluator level, for evaluation managers to see examples of work undertaken by different evaluators and the corresponding QA scores for the evaluations undertaken by them.

Recruiting qualified evaluators may be a challenge. At the country level, evaluation managers have reportedly launched and supported national evaluation capacity development (NECD) activities, and often leads the M&E component of inter-agency and joint programmes<sup>181</sup>. IEO organizes National Evaluation Capacity (NEC) conferences.

The development of national evaluation capacities, beyond just UNDP staff, is highlighted as a critical challenge. This is particularly relevant given UNDP's use of the National Implementation Modality (NIM), where responsibility for implementing certain activities is delegated to national partners, making their evaluation capacity equally essential for project success<sup>182</sup>.

## 5.6. Utility, use, and follow-up

### 5.6.1. Use of evaluation findings

The prominence and recognition of decentralized evaluation within UNDP is generally strong, though it can vary by region. Its influence often depends on the extent to which senior management prioritizes and values the role of evaluation<sup>183</sup>. There is one evaluation specialist in the BPPS tasked with an advisory and advocacy role for evaluation in decision-making process<sup>184</sup>. At the country level, informants report more and more evaluative evidence that is utilized into new programmes<sup>185</sup>. Additionally, evaluations have reportedly been used by senior management to support fundraising efforts<sup>186</sup>.

The IEO undertakes various initiatives to highlight the utility and enhance use of evaluation within UNDP. These include the recently developed Artificial Intelligence for Development Analytics (AIDA) tool<sup>187</sup>, which synthesizes insights from evaluation reports in the Evaluation Resource Center (ERC). Additionally, the IEO produces the “Reflection” series of knowledge products<sup>188</sup>, offering lessons from past evaluations aimed at

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<sup>179</sup> From the Terms of Reference of Regional Evaluation Advisers.

<sup>180</sup> United Nations Development Programme - Evaluation -Events -EOI -ExpRes Roster. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/exproster/>

<sup>181</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>182</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>183</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>184</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>185</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>186</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>187</sup> AIDA. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://aida.undp.org/?from=>

<sup>188</sup> IEO Reflections. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/reflections/index.shtml>



informing country-level decision-making. Other initiatives include evaluation syntheses<sup>189</sup> and the annual Evaluation Excellence Awards<sup>190</sup>, which aim to recognize and promote the use of DE across the organization.

### **5.6.1. Management response**

UNDP institutionalized and facilitated the use of evaluation results through developing a management response mechanism. Management responses and key actions with timelines are required to be posted in the ERC and the implementation are monitored by RBx. The implementation of management response is also one of the KPIs monitored and reported by BPPS to the UNDP senior management. Management responses must be developed and uploaded to the ERC within 6 weeks of acceptance of an evaluation report.

At the programme unit level, UNDP evaluation managers are also tasked with ensuring evaluation findings are both available and monitored for follow-up. Evaluation findings are reportedly well absorbed by project steering committees, learning events, and through joint monitoring with governments<sup>191</sup>.

Responsibilities for DE managers include contributing to management responses for evaluation recommendations, making key documents accessible via ERC on schedule, and providing quarterly reports on the status of these responses.<sup>192</sup> All evaluation recommendations must have a corresponding management response, which is uploaded to the ERC and whose quality is assessed as part of the overall QA process. Evaluation managers also organize meetings to discuss findings, integrate recommendations into decision-making processes, and, in collaboration with programme and communication officers, prepare additional summaries, like evaluation briefs, to support wider dissemination and use of evaluation results.

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<sup>189</sup> IEO Evaluation Synthesis. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/synthesis/>

<sup>190</sup> IEO Evaluation Excellence Awards. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/award/evaluations/about-2024.shtml>

<sup>191</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>192</sup> Source: KII.

## 6. UNEP

### 6.1. DE architecture and its enabling environment

The evaluation architecture at UNEP is distinctively centralized. Only the Evaluation Office holds the mandate for conducting evaluations. Any performance assessment that is commissioned and overseen by UNEP staff outside of the Evaluation Office is defined by UNEP Evaluation Policy as “management-led reviews” (MLR)<sup>193</sup>. UNEP avoids the term “decentralized evaluations” for processes that lack the necessary independence, opting to use MLR to maintain clarity and integrity in terminology, as emphasized during discussions on evaluation standards<sup>194</sup>.

UNEP operates without country offices, and its regional offices are not responsible for project implementation and associated MLR responsibilities, which rest with UNEP’s Divisions. Project Performance Assessment Focal Points are nominated among UNEP staff and serve as a point of contact between Divisions and the Evaluation Office on projects nearing completion, which will undergo either an Evaluation or MLR<sup>195</sup>.

In addition to project-level evaluations, the Evaluation Office also carries out strategic and cross-cutting thematic evaluations including sub-programme evaluations, impact evaluations/studies, programme/portfolio evaluations and joint evaluations<sup>196</sup>.

The Evaluation Office supports MLRs by providing ongoing assistance to Divisions and consultants. It also enhances evaluation capacity through the dissemination of tools, guidance, and the organization of webinars for project managers and reviewers.

### 6.2. Responsibilities for the DE function

#### 6.2.1. Management arrangements

Evaluations are managed by the Evaluation Office. An Evaluation Manager is assigned to each evaluation included in the annual evaluation plan, along with a Peer Reviewer and an Evaluation Assistant from within the Evaluation Office. MLR are managed by the respective Project Manager<sup>197</sup>. In GEF-funded projects, which are the majority of UNEP projects, a task manager is appointed with responsibility for monitoring and results, and this person is likely to be appointed as MLR manager<sup>198</sup>. UNEP evaluation staff participate on a rotational basis in the validation and quality assessment of MLR, however, they are not directly involved in their implementation<sup>199</sup>.

#### 6.2.2. Evaluation planning

A single corporate-wide Evaluation Plan is prepared by the Director of Evaluation. For project-level evaluations, the Evaluation Office selects approximately 20-30 percent of projects nearing completion for

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<sup>193</sup> UNEP (2022). Evaluation Policy. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/41114>

<sup>194</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>195</sup> UNEP (2023). Evaluation Manual. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/42025>

<sup>196</sup> UNEP (2022), 15.

<sup>197</sup> UNEP (2023), 3.

<sup>198</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>199</sup> Source: KII.

evaluation<sup>200</sup>. The selection of projects is based on their strategic importance, contribution to under-evaluated areas, and potential for forming coherent evaluations, with less focus on frequently evaluated or low-expenditure projects<sup>201</sup>. Projects that are not selected for independent evaluation and exceed a specific financial threshold undergo MLRs.

Feedback from internal sources suggest that the distinction between evaluations and MLR stems from the difficulty of managing a large number evaluations internally with resource constraints, which was challenging to keep pace. Adopting the MLR model has allowed UNEP to allocate more resources to strategic evaluations, thereby balancing the focus and effectiveness of its evaluation efforts<sup>202</sup>.

### **6.2.3. Financial resources**

UNEP's policy mandates that the Executive Director allocate sufficient financial resources for the Evaluation Office to effectively manage and assure the quality of evaluations. This includes designing, planning, providing quality assurance, and monitoring compliance with recommendations<sup>203</sup>.

All project budgets, including GEF and GCF projects, include allocations for direct costs associated with evaluations or MLR, including covering external consultant fees and travel expenses. When a project is selected for evaluation, resources held in that budget line are transferred to the Evaluation Office. Costs used for MLR remain in the project budget and are used by project managers. Additionally, a cost recovery of 0.6 percent of annual extra-budgetary expenditure supports the evaluation oversight and quality assurance of externally funded projects and programmes<sup>204</sup>.

## **6.3. Quality controls**

### **6.3.1. Quality assurance**

For its independent evaluations, the UNEP Evaluation Office has in place a quality assurance framework to ensures that evaluations adhere to their terms of reference, align with UNEG Norms and Standards, and follow UNEP's specific guidance<sup>205</sup>. The quality assurance process involves internal peer reviews among evaluation staff, and for complex or strategically important evaluations, an Evaluation Reference Group is set up with both internal and external stakeholders and experts. An extensive number of templates, checklists, and guidelines developed by the Evaluation Office are publicly available<sup>206</sup>.

For MLR, the Evaluation Office is not involved in quality assurance during the process. Quality assurance is the responsibility of the MLR manager. Due to the infrequency of these reviews, fluctuations in quality are reportedly common<sup>207</sup>. To ensure quality, the Evaluation Office provides an extensive suite of guidance tools which are publicly available. These include: templates and structures for all reports; guidance covering methodology, theory of change, and other cross-cutting issues; criteria ratings and description matrices; financial and impact assessment tables and flowcharts; as well as consultant agreement forms and a glossary

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<sup>200</sup> UNEP (2022), 25.

<sup>201</sup> UNEP (2023), 2.

<sup>202</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>203</sup> UNEP (2022), 35.

<sup>204</sup> UNEP (2022), 35.

<sup>205</sup> UNEP (2023), 4.

<sup>206</sup> Independent Evaluation Tools and Templates - Evaluation Office of UNEP – Communities of Practice. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://communities.unep.org/display/eou/independent+evaluation+tools+and+templates>.

<sup>207</sup> Source: KII.

of results definitions<sup>208</sup>. The Evaluation Office has also developed a set of six Guidance Videos for MLR, available on UNEP YouTube channel, including an introduction to the MLR process and necessary tools, detailed guidance on tools for beginning the process, creating the Inception Report, compiling the Main Review Report, and formulating the conclusions, lessons, and recommendations<sup>209</sup>. The Evaluation Office also provides regular ex-ante webinars, Q&A and “clinics” with upcoming MLR managers<sup>210</sup>.

### 6.3.2. Quality assessment

While the Evaluation Office does not participate in the various stages of the MLR, it is responsible for ensuring that the final reports are comprehensive and adhere to the established template. The office conducts a final validation to benchmark the performance ratings and assess the overall quality of the MLR, adjusting ratings as necessary. The quality assessment utilizes a template that rates each section of the report—from the executive summary to effectiveness—on a scale from ‘Highly Unsatisfactory’ to ‘Highly Satisfactory.’ The overall quality of the report is then determined by averaging these section ratings<sup>211</sup>.

Additionally, the Evaluation Office monitors and benchmarks the quality trends of MLR reports, employing tools that define the standards of evidence required for each performance rating according to specific assessment criteria<sup>212</sup>.

## 6.4. Ensuring impartiality and transparency

For evaluations, the Evaluation Office has a set of mechanisms to ensure impartiality throughout the process. The annual evaluation plan is independently prepared by the Director of Evaluation after consulting with senior management and key stakeholders, and must be endorsed by the Executive Director before presentation to UNEP’s Committee of Permanent Representatives<sup>213</sup>. To ensure impartiality while hiring external consultants, the Evaluation Office also applies a matrix to rate candidates based on their interview performance.

For MLR, while the Evaluation Office is not involved in the selection of MLR teams, it mandates that external consultants must not have been involved in the design or implementation of the project, as this could compromise their impartiality. Additionally, consultants are prohibited from having financial interests with the project’s managing unit for six months post-contract. They are also required to sign a Code of Conduct Agreement Form. Furthermore, consultants who conducted the Mid-Term Evaluation for a project are typically not selected for the MLR to prevent confirmation bias<sup>214</sup>. Additionally, the set of guidance tools provided by the Evaluation Office for MLR were developed with a view to ensure impartiality<sup>215</sup>.

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<sup>208</sup> Management-Led Review Tools - Evaluation Office of UNEP – Communities of Practice. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://communities.unep.org/display/eou/management-led+review+tools>

<sup>209</sup> Eou Guidance Videos Tools - Evaluation Office of UNEP – Communities of Practice. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://communities.unep.org/display/eou/guidance+videos>

<sup>210</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>211</sup> Quality Assessment of Terminal Reviews. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://unepazevalblobstorage.blob.core.windows.net/mgtledreviewtools/2.%20standard%20mgt%20led%20terminal%20reviews/00f\\_tr%20quality%20assess%20of%20tr%20report%20template%20for%20use%20by%20unep\\_18.06.24.docx?sv=2021-10-04&ss=btqf&srt=sco&st=2024-10-01t08%3a37%3a40z&se=2025-01-03t08%3a37%3a00z&sp=rwdl&sig=14ez1o%2fwa%2bhle%2fpjl85pihc3c7zsnuor%2f3zfb76yvys%3d](https://unepazevalblobstorage.blob.core.windows.net/mgtledreviewtools/2.%20standard%20mgt%20led%20terminal%20reviews/00f_tr%20quality%20assess%20of%20tr%20report%20template%20for%20use%20by%20unep_18.06.24.docx?sv=2021-10-04&ss=btqf&srt=sco&st=2024-10-01t08%3a37%3a40z&se=2025-01-03t08%3a37%3a00z&sp=rwdl&sig=14ez1o%2fwa%2bhle%2fpjl85pihc3c7zsnuor%2f3zfb76yvys%3d)

<sup>212</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>213</sup> UNEP (2022), 13.

<sup>214</sup> UNEP (2023), 3.

<sup>215</sup> Management-Led Review Tools - Evaluation Office of UNEP – Communities of Practice. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://communities.unep.org/display/eou/management-led+review+tools>

UNEP currently lacks a platform to effectively track MLR, although as of 2025, it plans to adopt the Unite evaluation management and knowledge sharing application, developed by UNODC<sup>216</sup>. This new system, integrated with Umoja, is aimed to enhance transparency by clearly displaying all MLR processes, including details on management and commissioning responsibilities<sup>217</sup>. However, all MLR reports<sup>218</sup> along with UNEP evaluation reports<sup>219</sup> are publicly available, notably published online in UNEP Document Repository.

## 6.5. Professional standards and capacity

The Evaluation Policy mandates that the UNEP Evaluation Office is staffed with adequately qualified personnel. All professional staff are required to possess substantial technical experience relevant to evaluation. This includes a comprehensive understanding of project and programme evaluation, conceptual and analytical capabilities, and expertise in results-based management. Qualifications for these positions are aligned with the UNEG Evaluation Competency Framework to ensure professionalism. Alongside the required competencies, the recruitment practices also adhere to principles ensuring geographical and gender balance<sup>220</sup>.

To develop the capacity of MLR managers, the Evaluation Office provides regular support throughout the process and organizes regular internal meetings to discuss different aspects related to the validation and quality assessment of MLR<sup>221</sup>.

To ensure the selection of competent evaluation and MLR consultants, the Evaluation Office provides MLR managers with a TOR template<sup>222</sup> and maintains a comprehensive database of past evaluators. Upon request, the Evaluation Office can use this database to recommend suitable consultants to project teams responsible for conducting MLR. For consultants new to UNEP's Review process, the Evaluation Office can hold a session with the contracted MLR consultant<sup>223</sup>.

## 6.6. Utility, use, and follow-up

### 6.6.1. Use of evaluation findings

Every two years, the Evaluation Office prepares a Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report. The report summarizes UNEP's performance through trends and patterns observed during the biennium from completed evaluations and MLR. Patterns and trends are used to identify recommendations and lessons to be brought to the attention of, and discussed with, UNEP Senior Management Team<sup>224</sup>.

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<sup>216</sup> Unite Evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/unite-evaluations.html>

<sup>217</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>218</sup> Validated Management-Led Terminal Review Reports. UNEP Document Repository. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/38891>

<sup>219</sup> Evaluation Reports. UNEP Document Repository. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/38893>

<sup>220</sup> UNEP (2022), 34.

<sup>221</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>222</sup> Management-Led Review Tools - Evaluation Office of UNEP – Communities of Practice. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://communities.unep.org/display/eou/management-led+review+tools>

<sup>223</sup> UNEP (2023), 4.

<sup>224</sup> Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Reports. UNEP Document Repository. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/41446>

### **6.6.2. Management response**

Once an evaluation report is finalized by the Evaluation Office, management is required to respond with a Recommendations Implementation Plan within one month. This plan outlines actions to address the evaluation's recommendations and sets a 12-month compliance period starting from the date the plan is finalized by management and the Evaluation Office<sup>225</sup>.

For MLR, a management response is also required. The Evaluation Office does not currently develop the Recommendations Implementation Plans nor oversee the management response, although the planned migration to the Unite platform in 2025 will enable the tracking and compliance with management responses for MLR<sup>226</sup>. Adherence to the MLR recommendations is expected and currently monitored at the corporate level through audit processes<sup>227</sup>.

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<sup>225</sup> UNEP (2023), 4.

<sup>226</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>227</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

## 7. UNESCO

### 7.1. DE architecture and its enabling environment

Decentralized evaluations (DE) at UNESCO are defined in its 2022-2029 Evaluation Policy as evaluations managed by the entity responsible for the intervention being evaluated<sup>228</sup>. This could encompass a single project, a programme, a portfolio, or a larger entity. The Policy highlights DE as important for providing insights for performance improvement and strategic corrections at mid-term, and for deriving lessons and enhancing accountability at the end of a project<sup>229</sup>.

The Evaluation Policy has placed a significant emphasis on strengthening DE, reflecting a strategic shift influenced by insights from recent external assessments. Both the 2020 Peer Review of UNESCO's Evaluation Function<sup>230</sup> and the 2019 MOPAN Performance Assessment<sup>231</sup> had highlighted the need to improve quality and coverage of the DE function. The new policy, along with the associated Evaluation Strategy<sup>232</sup>, aims to ensure that DE are adequately funded, their results communicated, and their findings actively used.

The DE architecture within UNESCO is designed to integrate various levels of oversight and support. At the heart is the central Evaluation Office (EVS) which is part of the HQ-based Division of Internal Oversight Services (IOS). Within EVS, six<sup>233</sup> staff members are responsible for supporting DEs alongside their primary duties. This support encompasses planning and budgeting, review of Terms of Reference (TOR), assisting with the recruitment of evaluation consultants, ensuring quality, and offering guidance on dissemination of findings<sup>234</sup>.

A network of about 120<sup>235</sup> staff members acting as Evaluation Focal Points (EFPs) across various field offices serve as the primary reference for all evaluation-related activities within their units. Their responsibilities include maintaining up-to-date evaluation competencies through training and providing direct support to evaluation managers from planning through the dissemination of findings<sup>236</sup>. Starting January 2025, the DE architecture also includes five Regional Evaluation Associates (REAs) who have been recruited on UNV

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<sup>228</sup> UNESCO (2022). UNESCO evaluation policy, 2022-2029. IOS/EVS/PI 202, 30. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381664>

<sup>229</sup> UNESCO (2022), 30.

<sup>230</sup> “*Recommendation 6: The Panel recommends the Evaluation Office takes additional steps to strengthen the quality of the decentralized evaluation system and decentralized evaluations.*” From United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), (2020). Professional Peer Review of the UNESCO Evaluation Function, 120. Retrieved from <https://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2778>

<sup>231</sup> “*The coverage and quality of decentralised evaluations requires strengthening, and a stronger body of evaluative evidence on UNESCO's normative engagement is needed. The recent increase in finance for evaluation will help, but staffing constraints may remain.*” From Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), (2019). MOPAN assessments: United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO), 2017-18 performance assessment, Box 7: Areas for improvement in 2018. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388736>

<sup>232</sup> UNESCO (2024a). UNESCO 2022-2029 evaluation strategy. IOS/EVS/PI 219. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390885.locale=en>

<sup>233</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>234</sup> UNESCO (2024b). Division of Internal Oversight Services (IOS): Annual Report 2023, 219 EX/18, 44. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388757.locale=en>

<sup>235</sup> UNESCO (2024b), 48.

<sup>236</sup> UNESCO (2023). UNESCO Evaluation Manual, IOS/EVS/PI 206, 1.5. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383948.locale=en>



contracts. REAs are stationed in five Regional Offices with a direct reporting line to EVS, and their duties will include strengthening the DE systems and enhancing DE capacity at the regional level<sup>237</sup>.

## **7.2. Responsibilities for the DE function**

### **7.2.1. Management arrangements**

DE at UNESCO are managed by the entity responsible for the intervention under evaluation, such as Sectors, Field Offices, or Institutes<sup>238</sup>. Evaluation managers are appointed by senior management of the respective Sectors, Field Offices, or Institutes. In practice, the concerned project responsible officer is often appointed as evaluation manager<sup>239</sup>. However, senior managers are encouraged to appoint staff who have not been involved in the project's implementation to foster independence.

The effectiveness of DEs at UNESCO is supported but also affected by the capacity and engagement of the EFPs, who are tasked with quality assurance and managerial support. The EFPs are spread across various field offices. Their effectiveness is uneven and often hampered by their dual roles, as they balance DE responsibilities with their primary job functions<sup>240</sup>. Additionally, EFP are appointed by senior management, not EVS. The addition of REAs is designed to strengthen this framework, though the full impact of this new role will only show once the REAs have established themselves in their respective regional context. Once the REAs are integrated, the role of EFP may evolve, potentially enhancing their capacity to act as evaluation “champions” within their respective regional portfolio to foster a more robust evaluation culture<sup>241</sup>.

### **7.2.2. Evaluation planning**

At UNESCO, the planning of DE involves a structured process that starts with Programme Sectors, Field Offices, and Category 1 Institutes developing an annual evaluation plan. The Evaluation Manual mandate that these plans are shared with EVS for review and feedback, although in practice it rarely happens<sup>242</sup>. EVS provides a standard template to ensure consistency<sup>243</sup>. Final evaluation plans are uploaded to the corporate CORE Manager database with designated Evaluation Markers.

The criteria guiding DE planning include budget considerations and other parameters such as relevance, periodicity, timing, knowledge gaps, evaluability, risks, potential for replication or scaling up, accountability, and the possibility of joint evaluations<sup>244</sup>. Any UNESCO initiative with a budget exceeding USD 1.5 million mandates an independent external evaluation. For initiatives under this threshold, an evaluation is also recommended if financial resources, staff capacity, and time permit.

Despite these provisions, the actual coverage of evaluation planning across UNESCO has been uneven and selective, with not all entities consistently developing or completing their annual plans<sup>245</sup>. Recent improvements have mandated the inclusion of evaluation markers at the inception of new projects, whereby each new project must clearly state in CORE Manager whether an evaluation is scheduled, and what budget is

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<sup>237</sup> From the TOR of a Regional Evaluation Associate.

<sup>238</sup> UNESCO (2023), 1.5.

<sup>239</sup> UNESCO (2023), footnote 16.

<sup>240</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>241</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>242</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>243</sup> UNESCO (2023), Annex 1: Evaluation Guidance and Tools.

<sup>244</sup> UNESCO (2023), 1.7.

<sup>245</sup> Source: KII.



set aside for it. The Evaluation Strategy has also introduced one KPI to measure progress in the coverage of DE (number of UNESCO strategic outcomes covered by decentralized evaluations)<sup>246</sup>.

The DE planning process at UNESCO is designed to be adaptive, allowing for modifications in response to budgetary constraints or other arising issues. This flexibility supports UNESCO in adjusting their plans to better meet their specific needs and circumstances.

### **7.2.3. Financial resources**

UNESCO's Evaluation Policy stipulates that 3 percent of programme expenditures from both regular and voluntary contributions should be allocated as the minimum investment level for evaluation<sup>247</sup>. This funding primarily supports the conduct of evaluations, and also extends to evaluation capacity-building and national evaluation capacity development (NECD).

Each UNESCO project with a budget above 1.5M USD is required to integrate this 3 percent allocation into the operational budgets and to outline the use of these funds in the annual evaluation plans and project document. The Evaluation Policy also encourages the pooling of resources from multiple projects for thematic or cross-cutting evaluations, both to optimize learning and to reduce transaction costs<sup>248</sup>. As per Evaluation Policy, EVS can engage in resource mobilization efforts, including requesting voluntary contributions for specific evaluation activities, and encouraging in-kind contributions, e.g. secondments or expertise from Member States or the private sector<sup>249</sup>.

The budgeting for individual DE follows the 3 percent rule but is flexible, allowing adjustments according to specific project needs. High-risk projects or those requiring extensive field visits may allocate more than the standard 3 percent, while very large projects might justify a lesser proportion<sup>250</sup>.

Despite the provisions, actual spending on evaluations has been reported to average around 1.6 percent of project budgets during 2022-2023<sup>251</sup>. The Evaluation Strategy has introduced one KPI to measure progress in the resourcing of DE (Allocations for decentralized evaluations; % of project budget actually spent on evaluation)<sup>252</sup>.

The decentralization of the evaluation function is supported by REA, which are currently funded through International UNV Specialist modality due to budget constraints. The initiative is part of the 'Young Evaluator Programme' launched by UNEG and UN Volunteers (UNV) in 2023-24. It is viewed as a pilot and aims to demonstrate the value of REAs in strengthening DE practices, with the hope that these positions will eventually become permanent<sup>253</sup>.

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<sup>246</sup> UNESCO (2024a), KPI 1: Evaluation Thematic Coverage.

<sup>247</sup> UNESCO (2022), 41.

<sup>248</sup> UNESCO (2022), 42.

<sup>249</sup> UNESCO (2022), 42.

<sup>250</sup> UNESCO (2023), 2.4.

<sup>251</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>252</sup> UNESCO (2024a), KPI 2: Evaluation Financial Resources.

<sup>253</sup> Source: KII.

## 7.3. Quality controls

### 7.3.1. Quality assurance

Quality assurance for DE at UNESCO is outlined in the Evaluation Manual as a structured process. For EVS, this involves reviewing all draft evaluation products at various stages and overseeing DE's conduct. Responsibilities for QA are distributed across several roles: Evaluation managers draft and oversee TOR with input from EFPs, while all draft reports undergo further reviews by EVS and an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG). Final evaluation reports are approved by senior management within the relevant Sector, Field Office, or Institute<sup>254</sup>.

The Evaluation Manual was launched in 2023 to enhance the quality of DE by offering comprehensive guidance across the evaluation cycle, from planning through to implementation and utilization, in multiple languages. Detailed guidance tools for TOR<sup>255</sup>, inception reports<sup>256</sup>, and evaluation reports<sup>257</sup> have been developed by EVS to provide detailed instructions for evaluation managers. However, the application of the quality assurance processes across all DE is reportedly still evolving, with its systematic implementation not fully realized yet<sup>258</sup>.

### 7.3.2. Quality assessment

Each year, EVS reports on the quality of evaluations through the IOS Annual Report and the Annual Synthesis Review<sup>259</sup>, where an external consulting firm scores all completed evaluation reports on a 5-point scale against the UNESCO Evaluation Quality Checklist<sup>260</sup>. The template was recently amended to ensure standardization against UNEG Norms and Standards, and to incorporate specific UNESCO global priorities and recent UNEG guidelines on integrating gender equality, disability, and environmental considerations<sup>261</sup>. EVS is developing an online version of the quality assessment tool.

The Evaluation Strategy also introduced one KPI to measure progress in the quality of DE evaluations (% of decentralized evaluations rated satisfactory or above)<sup>262</sup>.

## 7.4. Ensuring impartiality and transparency

The Evaluation Policy emphasizes the importance of impartiality and transparency in its evaluation processes. Impartiality is primarily safeguarded using external consultants as evaluators<sup>263</sup>. Evaluators are hired in a way to ensure they have no prior involvement or personal stake, and the procurement is open and competitive to ensure transparency<sup>264</sup>.

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<sup>254</sup> UNESCO (2023), 3.6.

<sup>255</sup> UNESCO (2023), Guidance on Evaluation ToR.

<sup>256</sup> UNESCO (2023), Guidance on Evaluation Inception Reports.

<sup>257</sup> UNESCO (2023), Guidance on Evaluation Reports.

<sup>258</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>259</sup> UNESCO (2024c). 2024 Synthesis of UNESCO evaluations, IOS/EVA/PI/219, Appendix 4. Quality assessment of UNESCO evaluation reports. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391230.locale=en>

<sup>260</sup> UNESCO (2023), Evaluation Report Quality Checklist.

<sup>261</sup> UNESCO (2024b), 44.

<sup>262</sup> UNESCO (2024a), KPI 5: Evaluation Quality.

<sup>263</sup> UNESCO (2023), Guidance for selecting Evaluation Consultants.

<sup>264</sup> UNESCO Administrative Manual Section 10.2 'Procurement of Goods, Works and Services'. Retrieved from <https://manual-part1.unesco.org/EN/Pages/default.aspx>

Evaluation Reference Groups (ERG), comprising stakeholders with balanced representation, are often established and encouraged by EVS to further ensure impartiality and transparency throughout the evaluation process. These groups provide input and quality assurance for deliverables such as TOR, inception reports, and evaluation reports. Transparency in the evaluation process is also maintained through accountability mechanisms like the comment matrix, where evaluators document how feedback on draft reports is addressed.

However, final DE reports are not made publicly available; they are accessible only to internal staff via the UNESCO Evaluation Knowledge Hub. This internal platform hosts approximately 150 evaluation reports completed since 2015, facilitating the dissemination and utilization of evaluation findings within UNESCO. While corporate evaluations are available on UNESCO's public website, some DE are published within the respective sector or field office website<sup>265</sup>.

The mechanisms to ensure impartiality are designed to be participatory, involving diverse stakeholders to mitigate bias. Nevertheless, feedback from internal sources indicates that challenges persist, particularly in the management of DE, for instance in smaller offices, where staff might manage evaluations of projects that they manage<sup>266</sup>. However, EVS does not recall cases in which stakeholders have exerted some form of undue influence<sup>267</sup>. With a view to improve these aspects, the hiring of REA, which have a reporting line to EVS, aims to provide more robust and impartial oversight to the DE process.

## 7.5. Professional standards and capacity

The importance of maintaining high professional standards throughout the evaluation process, including for DE, is underscored in UNESCO's Evaluation Policy<sup>268</sup>. EVS supports this by ensuring that all staff with evaluation responsibilities undergo training on evaluations, and that job descriptions for EVS staff is informed by the UNEG Evaluation Competency Framework<sup>269</sup>.

To strengthen capacity for DE, EVS offers a suite of training and capacity-building activities, including online and face-to-face trainings, webinars in multiple languages, e-learning, ad hoc support, and the dissemination of guidance material. These initiatives aim to equip evaluation managers and EFP with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage and implement DE effectively.

In 2023, EVS conducted multiple training sessions globally, ranging from three-hour introductory courses to two-day, in-depth trainings with individual coaching, reaching 112 staff members in Bamako, Bangkok, Beirut and Erbil. Additionally, EVS hosted eight online webinars available in English, French, and Spanish, covering evaluation topics targeted at EFP<sup>270</sup>.

The Evaluation Policy mandates that all evaluation managers must complete an evaluation e-learning course, available on its platform, before initiating an evaluation process<sup>271</sup>. The Evaluation Strategy has also introduced one KPI to measure progress on skills and knowledge of EFPs and evaluation managers (number of EFPs and evaluation managers who completed a relevant evaluation training). EVS also tracks the number of webinars

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<sup>265</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>266</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>267</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>268</sup> UNESCO (2022), 54.

<sup>269</sup> UNESCO (2022), 13.

<sup>270</sup> UNESCO (2024b), 47.

<sup>271</sup> UNESCO (2022), 59.

and webinar participants, and visits to the Evaluation Knowledge Hub, although these two indicators are not part of the eight core Evaluation KPIs listed in the Evaluation Strategy<sup>272</sup>.

As for external consultants, the policy states that the professionalism of evaluators is critical<sup>273</sup>. The hiring process for external evaluators is rigorous and transparent, typically managed by programme staff. EVS supports these processes by providing guidance on drafting TOR and selecting qualified evaluation teams through checklists and qualifications criteria<sup>274</sup>. In practice, the quality of TOR varies; however, internal feedback indicates a positive trend in their improvement<sup>275</sup>. Consultants are selected based on their technical expertise, evaluation experience, and the ability to conduct gender-responsive and culturally sensitive evaluations.

EVS also supports by disseminating RFP, sharing rosters, and sometimes participating in the selection panels, where their input is reportedly highly valued and respected by programme staff<sup>276</sup>. To streamline the procurement of evaluators, in 2023 EVS supported the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report team in the establishment of Long-term Agreements (LTA) for evaluation services on education<sup>277</sup>.

## 7.6. Utility, use, and follow-up

### 7.6.1. Use of evaluation findings

UNESCO's Evaluation Policy emphasizes that an unused evaluation means wasted resources and missed opportunities<sup>278</sup>. To enhance the utility and uptake of evaluations, the policy calls for the active participation of identified users throughout the evaluation process, focusing on timely and relevant questions, ensuring accessibility to findings, and actively following up<sup>279</sup>.

EVS facilitates DE use among other things by providing evaluation managers with guidance and tools on the development of communication plans<sup>280</sup> and stakeholder mapping<sup>281</sup> during the evaluation preparation stage. The Evaluation Manual emphasizes the importance of using diverse, user-friendly formats and channels like policy briefs, infographics, and webinars, to ensure that evaluation findings are accessible and utilized<sup>282</sup>.

Notwithstanding these efforts, the understanding and integration of evaluation insights within UNESCO reportedly varies significantly across different directorates and regions, often depending on the engagement and openness of leadership<sup>283</sup>. EVS continues to develop products like synthesis reports<sup>284</sup> to better integrate DE results into strategic decision-making, underscoring the policy commitment to enhancing the use of evaluation in its work. The Evaluation Strategy has also introduced one KPI to measure progress in use of DE (Extent to which staff report the use of evaluation for Project Formulation and during Annual Reporting)<sup>285</sup>.

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<sup>272</sup> UNESCO (2024a), KPI 3: Completion of Evaluation Training.

<sup>273</sup> UNESCO (2024a), 55.

<sup>274</sup> UNESCO (2023), Guidance for selecting Evaluation Consultants.

<sup>275</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>276</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>277</sup> UNESCO (2024b), 49.

<sup>278</sup> UNESCO (2022), 45.

<sup>279</sup> UNESCO (2022), 46.

<sup>280</sup> UNESCO (2023), Guidance for developing an Evaluation Communication Plan.

<sup>281</sup> UNESCO (2023), Evaluation Stakeholders Mapping Template.

<sup>282</sup> UNESCO (2023), 4.2.

<sup>283</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>284</sup> UNESCO (2024d). UNESCO Evaluation Insights, 56: 2024 Synthesis of UNESCO Evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391237.locale=en>

<sup>285</sup> UNESCO (2024a), KPI 8: Evaluation Use.

### **7.6.2. Management response**

Management responses to DE are required by the Evaluation Policy<sup>286</sup>. While corporate evaluations management responses are always developed and published, this practice is slowly gaining adherence with DE<sup>287</sup>. Responsibility for completing the management response and its action plan lies with senior management, who should take an active role in implementing evaluation recommendations<sup>288</sup>. The completion of management responses (% of decentralized evaluations that include a Management Response) and the implementation of recommendations (implementation status [started/completed/pending] of evaluation recommendations for decentralized evaluations) are now tracked as KPI under the Evaluation Strategy<sup>289</sup>.

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<sup>286</sup> UNESCO (2022), 52.

<sup>287</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>288</sup> UNESCO (2023), 4.1.

<sup>289</sup> UNESCO (2024a), KPI 6: Completion of Management Response; KPI 7: Implementation of Evaluation Recommendations.

## 8. UNFPA

### 8.1. DE architecture and its enabling environment

DE in UNFPA, as formalized in its 2024 Evaluation Policy, encompasses evaluations commissioned by Country Offices (COs), Regional Offices (ROs), and HQ business units<sup>290</sup>. These evaluations include country programme evaluations (CPE)<sup>291</sup>, regional programme evaluations (RPE)<sup>292</sup>, and for the first time<sup>293</sup> project evaluations, catering to both regular and other resource-funded interventions. In humanitarian situations, DE also covers emergency responses manageable within existing resources of the country office, with some support from regional offices and headquarters when necessary.

The new Evaluation Policy, which has reportedly elevated the DE function<sup>294</sup>, emphasizes the necessity for organizational coherence<sup>295</sup>. The DE function maintains strong connections across the organization, with defined roles for COs, ROs, and the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO).

The DE architecture is structured across multiple levels. At HQ within the IEO, the DE team comprises a Team Lead (P5), an Evaluation Capacity Development Specialist (P4), and an Evaluation Analyst (P2), with discussions ongoing about adding a UN Volunteer<sup>296</sup>. A Humanitarian Evaluation team, with one Team Lead (P5) and one Humanitarian Evaluation Specialist (P4), supports the DE function with regards to decentralized humanitarian evaluations.<sup>297</sup>

At the regional level, six Regional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisors (RPMEAs, P5<sup>298</sup>) functionally report to the IEO for evaluation matters and directly report to Regional Directors. Evaluation is not the RPMEA's main task, although evaluation duties reportedly involve half of their time, particularly since the new Evaluation Policy has extended the scope to project evaluations<sup>299</sup>.

The IEO plays a key role in supporting DE, with a stated emphasis on quality assurance and evaluation capacity development<sup>300</sup>. The IEO reports annually on the DE function's performance to the UNFPA Executive Board as part of the Annual Report on the Evaluation Function, to ensure accountability and provide updates on the status of evaluation implementation<sup>301</sup>.

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<sup>290</sup> United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2024a). *Evaluation Policy* (DP/FPA/2024/1), 15. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/unfpa-evaluation-policy-2024>

<sup>291</sup> CPE "provide an assessment of the entirety of the country programme and assess whether UNFPA has made appropriate strategic choices in the given context and delivered effectively". They are "(...) designed to meet the need for learning and accountability at UNFPA, and to inform the strategic orientation and the design of the next programme cycle". From UNFPA (2023). *UNFPA Evaluation Strategy, 2022-2025*, 2.2.2. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/unfpa-evaluation-strategy-2022-2025>

<sup>292</sup> RPE "provide an assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of UNFPA support and progress towards the expected outputs and outcomes set forth in the results framework of the regional programme". UNFPA (2023), 2.2.2.

<sup>293</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>294</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>295</sup> UNFPA (2024a), 17.

<sup>296</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>297</sup> The Humanitarian Evaluation team also manages all corporate or centralized humanitarian evaluations. In addition, the team manages select country programme evaluations in humanitarian contexts, especially in complex crisis settings. Hence, it is possible that country programme evaluations are managed centrally by UNFPA IEO staff, but only in humanitarian contexts. Source: KII.

<sup>298</sup> UNFPA (2024a), 46.

<sup>299</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>300</sup> UNFPA (2023), 2.2.1.

<sup>301</sup> UNFPA (2024a), 94.



## 8.2. Responsibilities for the DE function

### 8.2.1. Management arrangements

The new UNFPA Evaluation Policy details management arrangements for CPEs, RPEs, and evaluations of emergency responses (EER). Typically, CPEs are managed by COs. The appointment of an evaluation manager is done by the CO representative. Typically, the manager is the M&E officer. Some UNFPA offices do not have a dedicated M&E officer but only a M&E focal point only who is usually a programmatic staff who performs M&E functions<sup>302</sup>. In such cases, another CO staff member designated by the representative in consultation with the RMEA<sup>303</sup>. This includes M&E officers who have been involved in the project.

In some cases, CPEs of strategic importance can be managed by the RPMEA or the IEO directly. RPEs are usually managed by Regional Offices (ROs), with the IEO providing guidance and quality assurance. EERs are managed by the CO or RO, except for major emergencies, which are handled by the IEO<sup>304</sup>. Country-level project evaluations are managed by the business unit (HQ, regional or CO) which implements the project, and the RPMEAs provide quality assurance<sup>305</sup>.

### 8.2.2. Evaluation planning

Decentralized evaluation planning typically initiates at the start of the programme cycle, when a Costed Evaluation Plan (CEP) must be attached to the Country Programme Document (CPD). Planning criteria of programme-level DEs are provided for in the Evaluation Policy. RPE and CPE are recommended to be conducted every programme cycle, and as a minimum every two cycles. In fact, RPE are conducted every cycle.<sup>306</sup> At least 1 evaluation of major emergency responses must be done every year. For other types of evaluation, the decision is taken on a yearly basis<sup>307</sup>. The 2022-2025 Evaluation Strategy also sets a target to ensure that at least 90% of CPE are completed as planned. Additionally, it aims for at least 90% of country offices to conduct a CPE once every two cycles, ensuring consistent and thorough evaluation coverage across all regions<sup>308</sup>.

The drafting of the CEP is led by the M&E officer and approved by the CO representative, who is accountable for its implementation. The planning process starts with the CO M&E officer or focal point who identifies evidence gaps and knowledge needs, as a preamble to inform the selection of the most relevant evaluations. This approach reportedly offers a reflective component for managers, encouraging a thorough gap analysis to ascertain the necessity and feasibility of evaluations, thus preventing the overcrowding of the evaluation pipeline with unfeasible or unnecessary studies<sup>309</sup>.

The RPMEA reviews the CEP prior to the submission to the Peer Review Committee (PRC). The IEO is a member of the PRC tasked with assessing the draft CEP against a standard checklist<sup>310</sup>, where potential

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<sup>302</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>303</sup> UNFPA (2024b). Evaluation Handbook 2024. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/evaluation-handbook-2024>

<sup>304</sup> UNFPA (2024a), Annex 5.

<sup>305</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>306</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>307</sup> UNFPA (2024a), Annex 5.

<sup>308</sup> UNFPA (2023), 5.1.

<sup>309</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>310</sup> Checklist for drafting a good quality CPE. From UNFPA (2024c). Costed evaluation plan Guidance and template, 2. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/costed-evaluation-plan-guidance-and-template>

discrepancies can be addressed, for example in budgeting, and suggestions for refinement can be offered<sup>311</sup>. Once endorsed by the PRC, the CEP is annexed to the CPD submitted to the Executive Board, which approves all the annexes along with the new CPD. The endorsement is simultaneous and the IEO, as part of the PRC, not only reviews the CEP but also the CPD, ensuring that it is informed by sufficient evaluative evidence. This is a measure to help improve the use of evaluations, notably DE<sup>312</sup>.

The IEO, in collaboration with the RPMEA, tracks the CEPs implementation progress over the course of the country programme cycle. In 2024, the IEO developed a tracking tool and plans to request mandatory quarterly updates<sup>313</sup>. Since 2024, the IEO provides a guidance for DE planning called the Costed Evaluation Plan Guidance and Templates<sup>314</sup>, to standardize the planning process across the organization. The Evaluation Policy emphasizes that evaluation coverage is crucial for ensuring that UNFPA's policies, strategies, and programmes are grounded in evidence DE<sup>315</sup>.

### **8.2.3. Financial resources**

The Evaluation Policy emphasizes the need to ensure that evaluation staffing, funding, and governance are structured in such a way that each level of the organization can generate evaluative evidence tailored to their specific learning needs while also contributing to overarching organizational accountability<sup>316</sup>. The corporate Multi-Year Costed Evaluation Plan foresees 66 CPEs (budget of USD 4.6M) and 6 RPEs (budget of USD 450k) to be conducted in 2024-2027<sup>317</sup>.

The policy also indicates the establishment “in a phased manner” of an evaluation pooled fund (EPF) with the aim of optimizing resources, creating synergies and avoiding cross-subsidization from regular resources. In the first phase, a budget line for evaluation will be included in donor funding agreements above USD 5 million on a voluntary basis. Country offices will directly manage the funds and the related project-level evaluation within the evaluation quality assurance system. When such contributions reach an economy of scale, the establishment of a UPF will be considered.

## **8.3. Quality controls**

### **8.3.1. Quality assurance**

UNFPA's system to ensure quality in evaluation encompasses both quality assurance and quality assessment. The Evaluation Quality Assurance and Assessment (EQAA) system, revamped in 2024, defines quality assurance as a systematic process “for ensuring that evaluations are conducted in a rigorous, impartial, and transparent manner, producing credible and actionable evidence to inform decision-making”<sup>318</sup>. The process includes that since 2024, approval of evaluation TORs is undertaken by the RPMEA, rather than by the IEO. Similarly, evaluation teams are pre-vetted and pre-qualified by the PRMEA<sup>319</sup>. It also involves a reference group of internal and external stakeholders in all CPEs and RPEs and in most project evaluations<sup>320</sup>. Tools to

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<sup>311</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>312</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>313</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>314</sup> UNFPA (2025). Costed Evaluation Plan Guidance, Tools and Templates.

<sup>315</sup> UNFPA (2024a), 58.

<sup>316</sup> UNFPA (2024a), 17.

<sup>317</sup> UNFPA (2024d). Multi-year costed evaluation plan, 2024-2027. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/multi-year-costed-evaluation-plan-2024-2027>

<sup>318</sup> UNFPA (2024e). Guidance on evaluation quality assurance and assessment. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/guidance-evaluation-quality-assurance-and-assessment>

<sup>319</sup> UNFPA (2023), 2.2.1.

<sup>320</sup> Source: KII.



enhance quality include a series of guidance documents issued by the IEO, alongside the 2024 Evaluation Handbook<sup>321</sup> and the Country Programme Evaluation Management Kit (CPEMK)<sup>322</sup>. There is also an e-learning course on evaluation launched by the IEO to deepen the knowledge and skills of evaluation managers. The responsibility for quality assurance is ongoing, and is shared among evaluation managers (M&E officers), RPMEA, and the IEO, integrated into evaluation practices. The quality of personnel involved in DE has reportedly seen significant enhancement, particularly at regional level with a more knowledgeable and engaged team contributing positively to the overall evaluation process. At country level, capacity gaps remain, including because of the lack of dedicated M&E personnel in smaller offices<sup>323</sup>.

### **8.3.2. Quality assessment**

Unlike quality assurance, evaluation quality assessment (EQA) occurs post-evaluation, and is managed by the IEO using external reviewers, with evaluations measured against a quality grid. The EQA system, updated in 2024<sup>324</sup> uses UNEG evaluation report standards and incorporates additional criteria relevant to UNFPA<sup>325</sup> and its grid is closely aligned with the grid used as part of UNICEF's GEROS system<sup>326</sup>. The 2022-2025 Evaluation Strategy emphasizes improving the quality of DE reports by setting a target where at least 90% of decentralized programme-level evaluation reports are rated by the EQAA as 'good' or 'very good'<sup>327</sup>. Results are shared with relevant units and published on the IEO website. The EQA system assists in preparing the annual report on the evaluation function, which includes key performance indicators on DE and is presented to the Executive Board<sup>328</sup>. UNFPA also has a specialized quality assessment tool for developmental evaluations, although the latter tend to be centralized evaluations<sup>329</sup>.

It is possible that a decentralized evaluation could be a developmental evaluation, even though it is less likely to occur than at centralized level since these evaluations require more experienced evaluation managers than we have at country level.

## **8.4. Ensuring impartiality and transparency**

Impartiality in DE at UNFPA is mandated by the Evaluation Policy, requiring all evaluators to adhere to an Ethical Code of Conduct. This code underscores the need for evaluations to be independent, impartial, and rigorous. Evaluators cannot have been involved in the policy setting, design, or management of the subject of evaluation. Additionally, UNFPA ensures transparency by keeping the database of decentralized evaluation reports – but not project evaluations –, quality assessments, and management responses publicly available<sup>330</sup>. Starting in 2025, project evaluation reports will also be subject to quality controls and therefore published in the IEO database<sup>331</sup>.

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<sup>321</sup> UNFPA (2024b).

<sup>322</sup> Country Programme Evaluation Management Kit. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/country-programme-evaluation-management-kit>

<sup>323</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>324</sup> UNFPA (2024e).

<sup>325</sup> UNFPA (2023), 2.2.1.

<sup>326</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>327</sup> UNFPA (2023), 5.1.

<sup>328</sup> Evaluation Quality Assessment (EQA) Grid. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/guidance-evaluation-quality-assurance-and-assessment>

<sup>329</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>330</sup> UNFPA Evaluation database. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/evaluation/database>

<sup>331</sup> Source: KII.

## 8.5. Professional standards and capacity

UNFPA emphasizes the importance of enhancing the professionalism and capacity development of staff involved in DE. Notably, not all UNFPA offices have dedicated M&E officers, with many offices relying instead on designated M&E focal points. Additionally, evaluation responsibilities of RPMEAs are additional to other functions, which may limit the time available for ensuring quality assurance in DE<sup>332</sup>.

To this end, the IEO Decentralized Evaluation Team and RPMEAs conduct and coordinate several learning initiatives, promote exchange of knowledge, and provide guidance and tools. In this process, they closely collaborate with the Humanitarian Evaluation Team at the IEO.

The flagship resource to strengthen DE capacity among evaluation managers is the IEO's Evaluation Handbook, last updated in 2024<sup>333</sup>. The handbook guides each phase of the DE evaluation process, from preparation and design to fieldwork, reporting, and communication and use, and includes practical guidelines, customizable templates, checklists, and other tools. The handbook is aligned with UNFPA Strategic Plan. A compendium for humanitarian evaluation was also finalized in 2024<sup>334</sup>. Another resource is the Country Programme Evaluation Management Kit (CPEMK), which is available for UNFPA staff and focuses on how to draft good quality DE TOR, how to identify qualified evaluation consultants, and how to effectively communicate and disseminate the results of decentralized evaluations<sup>335</sup>. The suite of resources also includes a mandatory training for evaluation managers, as well as guidance on humanitarian evaluations<sup>336</sup>, guidance on integrating LNOB principles in evaluations<sup>337</sup>, guidance on disability inclusion in evaluations<sup>338</sup>, guidance on engaging youth in evaluations<sup>339</sup>, and guidance on integrating social and environmental standards in evaluations<sup>340</sup>. The 2022-2025 Evaluation Strategy's result frameworks sets two targets related to professionalism, such as that 100% of M&E officers complete the UNFPA e-learning course on CPE, and that 90% of them are members of the internal M&E networks, as well as operationalizing the CPE management kit across all regions<sup>341</sup>.

One reported challenge with maintaining professionalism in evaluation managers is the required frequency of CPEs, which are required every two programme cycles although they are encouraged to be carried out every cycle. This extended interval can lead to issues with personnel continuity, as managers involved in one CPE may no longer be present for the next due to staff turnover. New managers require retraining, underscoring the need for ongoing capacity development. In this context, project evaluations, which occur more frequently

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<sup>332</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>333</sup> UNFPA (2024b).

<sup>334</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>335</sup> Country Programme Evaluation Management Kit. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/country-programme-evaluation-management-kit>

<sup>336</sup> UNFPA (2024f). Guidance on humanitarian evaluations - Compendium to the Evaluation Handbook. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/guidance-humanitarian-evaluations>

<sup>337</sup> UNFPA (2022a). Guidance on integrating the principles of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind in UNFPA evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/guidance-integrating-principles-leaving-no-one-behind-and-reaching-furthest-behind>

<sup>338</sup> UNFPA (2020). Guidance on disability inclusion in UNFPA evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/guidance-disability-inclusion-unfpa-evaluations>

<sup>339</sup> UNFPA (2024g). Leveraging the power of youth in evaluation: A practical guide to meaningfully engaging youth in evaluation processes. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/leveraging-power-youth-evaluation-practical-guide-meaningfully-engaging-youth>

<sup>340</sup> UNFPA (2022b). Guidance on integrating social and environmental standards into evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/guidance-integrating-social-and-environmental-standards-evaluations>

<sup>341</sup> UNFPA (2023), 5.1.

within the cycle, reportedly serve as practical “training grounds” for CPEs, helping to maintain and enhance evaluative skills consistently across programme cycles<sup>342</sup>.

Decentralized evaluations are conducted by external consultants. Evaluators are pre-selected by COs and pre-vetted by RPMEAs. Feedback from internal sources indicates that at times, concerns have been internally raised about the quality of consultants<sup>343</sup>. The challenges in finding skilled evaluators, particularly in regions like francophone Africa, underline the importance of national evaluation capacity development. Financial constraints and competitive remunerations offered by other UN agencies to evaluators also impact UNFPA’s ability to attract top consultants, especially when budget allocations and salary negotiations are restricted by procurement processes. Reportedly, this situation illustrates the variance in the capability to secure high-quality DE personnel across different regions and emphasizes the importance of demonstrating the value of evaluations in UNFPA to secure adequate funding<sup>344</sup>. IEO strives to integrate young evaluators into DE teams, particularly for CPEs and RPEs. It has established standards for youth engagement in evaluations, aiming to actively involve young people as evaluators. Additionally, ROs conduct specific training workshops for young evaluators, exemplified by the first-ever Winter School for Young Evaluators hosted in the Arab States in 2019. Participants from these initiatives have been subsequently included in evaluation teams for CPEs within the region<sup>345</sup>.

## 8.6. Utility, use, and follow-up

### 8.6.1. Use of evaluation findings

The 2022-2025 Evaluation Strategy emphasizes using evaluation findings to meet strategic knowledge requirements, including the development and refinement of new programmes. It highlights how CPE and RPE are integral to the programme development processes, including alignment with UNSDCF and CPE by other UN agencies. The strategy points out that insights from these evaluations are crucial for informing strategic decisions. To do so, the strategy also plans for CPE and RPE to coincide with key milestones in internal decision-making processes. Additionally, the IEO has a dedicated evaluation use strategy for the period 2022-2025. While framed for centralized evaluation, its principle and approach are also applicable to DE<sup>346</sup>.

Feedback from internal sources also defines the use of evaluation as “the ultimate test of maturity” of an evaluation function: if reports are of good quality but are not used, a function cannot be considered mature<sup>347</sup>. The results of CPEs are systematically used in new CPD developments<sup>348</sup> as well as for wider learning initiatives<sup>349</sup>.

Evaluation use is also included in the strategy’s result framework, and a target is set where 100% of new country and regional programme documents must incorporate evaluative evidence. Additionally, it aims to produce periodic meta-synthesis reports aligned with strategic learning and knowledge requirements<sup>350</sup>.

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<sup>342</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>343</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>344</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>345</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>346</sup> UNFPA (2022). Strategy to enhance evaluation use through communications and knowledge management, 2022-2025. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/strategy-enhance-evaluation-use-through-communications-and-knowledge-management-2022>

<sup>347</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>348</sup> UNFPA (2024f). Annual Report on the evaluation function 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/annual-report-evaluation-function-2023>

<sup>349</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>350</sup> UNFPA (2023), 5.1.

To enhance the utility of evaluations, the IEO also advocates for the co-creation of recommendations<sup>351</sup>, emphasizing that this participatory approach should begin early in the evaluation process, particularly at the decentralized level. This method involves stakeholders throughout and is seen as a crucial step to ensure the relevance and use of evaluation findings.

The development and implementation of evaluation communication plans and related communication products are part of “advocacy tactic”, developed by communication staff at regional and country offices and led together with the M&E staff<sup>352</sup> to reach targeted stakeholders in time to expand evaluation use<sup>353</sup>. The IEO communication staff helps to conceptualize approaches and templates for communication products of DE. In addition, they provide support in interpreting relevant guidance in the Handbook in a way that regions and countries can generate context-specific DE communication plans<sup>354</sup>.

There are noted challenges in integrating evidence into organizational knowledge management channels beyond M&E communities of practice. Suggestions to improve the systems have been made<sup>355</sup>, specifically to improve the flow of centralized evaluation insights down to country offices, which would potentially enhance the maturity of the evaluation function, indicating a need for further development in this area<sup>356</sup>.

### **8.6.2. Management response**

UNFPA assigns the responsibility for tracking and following up on management responses to the Programme Division, rather than the evaluation unit. These responses include specific, time-bound actions with designated responsibilities for implementation, and are discussed with stakeholders and published in the evaluation database alongside the reports. The Programme Division manages the system and monitors management responses through a tracking system, while the evaluation unit contributes by reporting the data in their annual report<sup>357</sup>.

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<sup>351</sup> UNEG Use of Evaluation WG webinar - Co-Creating Recommendations, 26 Nov 2024. Webinar recording retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jP8CcXOT7Do>

<sup>352</sup> UNFPA (2024a), 52.

<sup>353</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>354</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>355</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>356</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>357</sup> UNFPA (2024a), 66.

## 9. UNHCR

### 9.1. DE architecture and its enabling environment

The UNHCR 2022 Evaluation Policy delineates the normative framework for its evaluation function<sup>358</sup>. Evaluations commissioned at country operation, regional bureau and HQ divisional levels are in UNHCR referred to as decentralized evaluations. DE include Decentralized Thematic or Multi-Country Evaluation (DTE), Programme or Project evaluations (PPE), and L2 emergency evaluations<sup>359</sup>. The Evaluation Policy is operationalized by the 2024-2027 Evaluation Strategy, detailing specific actions at each organizational level<sup>360</sup>.

The 2022 Policy shifted the focus from primarily HQ-centered evaluations to a universally applied, multi-level devolved function, aligning with the organization's decentralized structure<sup>361</sup>. The UNHCR evaluation function now mirrors its organization's structure, with a three-tiered model that operates at global, regional, and country levels.

At the HQ level, the Evaluation Office provides comprehensive support for DE across all levels through guidance, training, and quality assurance. Senior Evaluation Officers (SEO) based at HQ offer technical support and oversee decentralized division-led evaluations.

At the regional level, P4-level Senior Regional Evaluation Officers (SREO) stationed within regional bureaux deliver technical support and quality assurance for evaluations at both regional and country levels. Reporting directly to the Evaluation Office with a functional reporting line to the Director of the Bureau through the Head of Strategic Planning, SREO handle a variety of responsibilities. These include supporting DE, managing certain centralized evaluations, reviewing key deliverables, and building capacity. Described as “brokers”<sup>362</sup>, SREO possess a diverse skill set, actively engage with senior management, and play a central role in the DE function. At the country level, DE are integrated within multi-year monitoring and evaluation plans by country operations.

### 9.2. Responsibilities for the DE function

#### 9.2.1. Management arrangements

The management of DE at UNHCR is a collaborative effort involving offices, bureaux, divisions, and the Evaluation Office, following a subsidiarity approach<sup>363</sup>. These evaluations are initiated and proposed by these respective entities and can be co-managed with the Evaluation Office. The authority to commission a DE is with the head (Director or Representative) of the respective division, service, bureau, or country operation. The decision on whether to carry out a DE is supported by strategic, planning, or review meetings, to align

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<sup>358</sup> UNHCR (2022). UNHCR's Evaluation Policy 2022-2027. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcrs-evaluation-policy-2022-2027>

<sup>359</sup> UNHCR (2018). Quick Guide to Evaluation in UNHCR. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unhcr.org/media/quick-guide-evaluation-unhcr>

<sup>360</sup> UNHCR (2024a). UNHCR's Evaluation Strategy 2024-2027. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcrs-evaluation-strategy-2024-2027>

<sup>361</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>362</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>363</sup> Source: KII.

with the objectives of the UNHCR Evaluation Policy and Strategy to enhance the organization’s understanding of what works and integrate evidence-based lessons into policy and practice<sup>364</sup>.

Once an evaluation topic is determined, the head of the relevant unit nominates an Evaluation Manager. The DE manager should be sufficiently senior to secure support from colleagues, must not be directly involved in managing or implementing the subject of the evaluation, and should have a strong understanding of evidence-based decision-making. The EM’s role is to guide the evaluation scope and deliverables, ensuring that they align with the unit’s objectives and engage the right stakeholders. Additionally, the Evaluation Office encourages the designation of a permanent Evaluation Focal Point within each division, service, bureau, or country operation. This focal point, who may or may not be a DE manager<sup>365</sup>, receives evaluation training by the Evaluation Office and acts as a liaison between management and the Evaluation Office, facilitated through support from the SREO<sup>366</sup>.

### **9.2.2. Evaluation planning**

Under its recent corporate RBM policy<sup>367</sup>, UNHCR's programme cycle has three main phases – “PLAN for”, “GET”, and “SHOW Results” – aligned to the UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022-2026 and the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees<sup>368</sup>. Under this policy, evaluations including DE are defined and budgeted within the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan of each country operation, regional bureau, and HQ division. The M&E plan, which is mandatory since 2023<sup>369</sup>, which is accessible by relevant Regional Bureaux and HQ sections for oversight and support, provides an opportunity to consider which strategies, operations, topics or projects might be subject to evaluation during the multi-year cycle.

Additionally, SREO are tasked with developing regional evaluation plans that address specific themes and issues pertinent to their regions. This aims to facilitate and guide on the appropriateness of proposed evaluation topics, assisting in designing and commissioning DE, and supporting the gradual buildup of a robust evaluation plan tailored to regional learning needs<sup>370</sup>.

The 2022 Evaluation Policy sets forth coverage requirements<sup>371</sup>. All country operations have to undergo at least one DE within their Multi-Year Strategy cycle or every five years. However, there is no similar coverage norm for regional bureaux or HQ divisions, where evaluations are encouraged but not mandated. Internal DE guidelines, published in 2021, indicate that DE should serve one of three primary purposes: to directly inform specific policy or programmatic decisions (“Instrumental use”), to enhance understanding and guide ongoing processes (“Conceptual and process use”), or to build broader evidence in areas with existing knowledge gaps (“Persuasive use”)<sup>372</sup>.

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<sup>364</sup> UNHCR (2021). Decentralized Evaluation Guidelines. A Guide for Managing Decentralized Evaluation in UNHCR, Step 1 – Commissioning a Decentralized Evaluation.

<sup>365</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>366</sup> UNHCR (2021), 1.4 Who decides on and manages the evaluation.

<sup>367</sup> UNHCR (2024b). UNHCR Programme Handbook for Partners. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcr-programme-handbook-partners>

<sup>368</sup> United Nations (2018). Global Compact on Refugees. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unhcr.org/media/global-compact-refugees-booklet>

<sup>369</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>370</sup> UNHCR (2021), 1.4.

<sup>371</sup> UNHCR (2022), Coverage Norms.

<sup>372</sup> UNHCR (2021), 1.2 When to evaluate.



### **9.2.3. Financial resources**

The UNHCR Evaluation Policy aims to enhance evaluation capacity across all Regional Bureaux by 2027. As of 2024, five out of seven bureaux have appointed P4-level SREO reporting directly to the Evaluation Office<sup>373</sup>. At the country level, fewer than 15 country operations reportedly have M&E staff, although a formal recruitment for such positions is slated for development. This is reportedly associated with donor practices with resources earmarked to specific projects<sup>374</sup>.

The Evaluation Policy emphasizes UNHCR's commitment to ensure that evaluations are adequately and sustainably funded through costed multi-year M&E plans. Funding for DE varies by level. DE commissioned by management at the global level are financed through the commissioning Division's Operating Limit (OL) budget and, when applicable, donor resources. Regional DE are funded by the Bureau's OL and, if necessary, donor resources. Funding for country-level DE comes from the Country operation's OL, with additional support from the Bureau's OL as required, especially in smaller operations. At UNHCR, Country Strategy Evaluations are categorized as centralized evaluations, not DE, and are funded by the Evaluation Office's OL. Starting in 2026, these evaluations will transition to being funded by the Bureau OL<sup>375</sup>.

## **9.3. Quality controls**

### **9.3.1. Quality assurance**

Quality assurance provisions for DE at UNHCR consist of a multi-layer process. Initial quality assurance is conducted by the manager responsible for the evaluation deliverables (TOR, inception reports, and draft evaluation reports), which are prepared by independent consultants or firms. Evaluation Reference Groups, established for most DE, provide the second layer of review. A third layer involves a review by SREO. Finally, an independent QA Function reviews all draft TORs, IRs, and Draft Final Reports, as well as ex-post annual quality assessment of all reports, focusing on key findings, ratings, and recommendations<sup>376</sup>.

DE managers submit all deliverables directly to the independent QA function, reviewed against set criteria, and feedback is returned within five working days<sup>377</sup>. The process prioritizes qualitative feedback, with scoring provided upon request or during the annual review, aiming primarily at enhancing quality<sup>378</sup>. The Evaluation Office provides quality assurance templates for TOR, inception reports and evaluation reports<sup>379</sup>.

### **9.3.2. Quality assessment**

An annual ex-post quality assessment is conducted by the independent QA service provider to reassess all final evaluation reports and their development processes. This review utilizes quantitative scoring based on a set of post-hoc quality criteria.

Notably, the quality assessment looks not just at the final reports but also at the entire sequence from TOR to Inception Reports and Evaluation Reports, as well as at the extent to which the evaluation teams has integrated

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<sup>373</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>374</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>375</sup> UNHCR (2022), Resources for evaluation.

<sup>376</sup> UNHCR (2021), 5.2 Process to follow.

<sup>377</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>378</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>379</sup> Quality assurance templates for TOR, inception and evaluation reports. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unhcr.org/media/quality-assurance-templates-tor-inception-and-evaluation-reports>



feedback from stakeholders as reported in the comment matrix<sup>380</sup>. The comprehensive approach aims to identify levels of improvement and assess overall quality.

The annual quality assessment also includes an analysis per every QA criteria section highlighting good practices, weaknesses and examples, making recommendations. Findings are presented and discussed yearly, and incorporated into the Annual Report on Evaluation, which is submitted to UNHCR's Executive Committee<sup>381</sup>.

Feedback from internal sources highlights that over half of UNHCR's evaluations are inter-agency collaborations, frequently involving organizations like ILO, IOM, and UNDP. This dynamic introduces unique challenges related to differing capacities and participation levels among the agencies. UNHCR's sometimes more stringent assessment standards can complicate consensus-building in these settings. Recognizing these challenges, it has been suggested that the development of guidelines for conducting joint DE could be beneficial<sup>382</sup>.

## 9.4. Ensuring impartiality and transparency

The UNHCR policy emphasizes the importance of impartiality in evaluations, and that it must be maintained throughout the evaluation process, from planning to recommendations. It defines impartiality by objectivity, professional integrity, and the absence of bias. UNHCR provisions to ensure impartiality include maintaining the professional integrity of evaluation managers and teams, preventing undue influence that could introduce bias, and establishing supportive structures and processes that act as safeguards against any partiality<sup>383</sup>.

The DE manager is appointed among senior staff with a requirement of not having been involved in the management or implementation of the programme under evaluation. In the selection and tendering process, technical proposals are assessed independently by reviewers who score and provide feedback autonomously<sup>384</sup>. Evaluations are carried out by independent firms that manage their own logistical and administrative needs, although they may depend on UNHCR for support with in-country travel in areas affected by conflict or where access is challenging<sup>385</sup>. Once recruited, all evaluators must sign a Confidentiality Agreement and where necessary the UNEG Code of Conduct. Additionally, Evaluation Reference Groups (ERGs), comprising both internal and external stakeholders, including networks of displaced persons<sup>386</sup>, guide the evaluation process. While not mandatory for DE, ERG are encouraged by the Evaluation Office. They review and provide insights on all evaluation outputs, from TOR to the final report, ensuring that the conclusions and recommendations maintain impartiality<sup>387</sup>.

To ensure transparency, as outlined in the Evaluation Policy, evaluation reports of UNHCR policies, strategies, programmes and projects are made publicly available, though only those that meet a quality threshold. The responsibility for disclosure rests with the commissioner of the evaluation. DE reports are published on

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<sup>380</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>381</sup> UNHCR (2024c). Report on evaluation – 2024 Executive Committee session. A/AC.96/75/9. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unhcr.org/media/report-evaluation-2024-executive-committee-session>

<sup>382</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>383</sup> UNHCR (2022), UNHCR's Evaluation Principles.

<sup>384</sup> UNHCR (2021), 2.5 Procuring consulting services.

<sup>385</sup> UNHCR (2021), 2.6 Process to follow.

<sup>386</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>387</sup> UNHCR (2021), 5.2 Process to follow.

UNHCR’s evaluation website under the “decentralized” category once approved by the Head of Evaluation Office after passing the quality threshold, determined by the independent quality assessment<sup>388</sup>.

## 9.5. Professional standards and capacity

Feedback from internal sources indicates that the Evaluation Office has established a very solid practice in terms of evaluation standards at the global level, and it is actively strengthening practices by “building a fabric” at the regional level. However, at the country level, the function is not yet consolidated, characterized by a “thin fabric” where donor-driven earmarking practices result in M&E staff often working in isolation on specific projects without systemic institutionalization. This results in pockets of excellence that are not sustainable as specialists may leave, and there’s little incentive to collaborate across projects<sup>389</sup>.

The Evaluation Office is working to address these challenges by advocating for country leadership to acknowledge the importance of evaluation and by fostering a more integrated network through training and strategic development<sup>390</sup>. These capacity building initiatives, led by the Evaluation Office and sometimes collaboration with the Division of Strategic Planning and Results, target particularly senior management at the field level.

Additionally, SREO coach and tutor DE managers, including training in collaboration with ITC ILO<sup>391</sup>, providing guidance, support and technical assistance as part of their TORs. The UNHCR evaluation strategy also emphasizes initiatives including updating evaluation guidance, developing modular training from new UNEG materials, expanding global and regional help desks for technical assistance, and fostering Communities of Practices, M&E networks, and stretch assignments for practical experience in evaluation design and management<sup>392</sup>.

DE are carried out by independent evaluation teams. The Evaluation Office provides comprehensive support to DE managers in forming evaluation teams, from identifying suitable profiles to contracting processes. This includes technical input on Terms of Reference and evaluations of bids. A multi-year Global Framework Agreement (GFA) managed by the Evaluation Office in collaboration with the Supply function includes evaluation consulting firms categorized by expertise relevant to UNHCR’s work, with one lot dedicated to DE. This arrangement facilitates faster recruitment through secondary bidding, ensures stable pricing, and provides access to vetted companies. When needed, depending on the DE scope, the Evaluation Office also assists with contracting individual consultants (rather than companies) outside the GFA, utilizing consultant rosters to source relevant evaluation experts or subject matter experts with evaluative experience<sup>393</sup>.

## 9.6. Utility, use, and follow-up

### 9.6.1. Use of evaluation findings

UNHCR systematically integrates DE results into Multi-Year Strategic Plans (MYS) and Annual strategy implementation reviews to inform modifications and updates. This system aligns with the new RBM policy and aims to maximize the use and uptake of DE findings. However, the effectiveness and consistency of

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<sup>388</sup> Search UNHCR. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://www.unhcr.org/search?sm\\_tags=decentralized&sm\\_site\\_name\[\]=Global%20site](https://www.unhcr.org/search?sm_tags=decentralized&sm_site_name[]=Global%20site)

<sup>389</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>390</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>391</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>392</sup> UNHCR (2024a), Workstream E: Capacity Development.

<sup>393</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

integrating DE evidence into country strategies and programme documents are currently variable and challenging to monitor<sup>394</sup>.

The Evaluation Office promotes DE results through dissemination events, knowledge products<sup>395</sup>, including mandatory two-pager briefs, presentations, and a YouTube channel<sup>396</sup>; synthesizes evaluations on key themes, including on a dedicated, Year In Review online portal<sup>397</sup>, all aiming at changing the way evaluations are seen, and advocating for a participatory and utilization-focused evaluation approach<sup>398</sup>.

## 9.7. Management response

UNHCR's management response process for DE is outlined in the 2021 DE Guidelines. The DE manager collaborates with the Commissioner to develop and finalize the management response, which is then reviewed for completeness and published on the Evaluation Office website. Management responses are required within two months after the publication of the evaluation report<sup>399</sup>.

The Evaluation Office monitors the implementation of management response actions using an internal dashboard, conducting annual follow-ups over two years to track progress. Delays in this process can occur due to staff turnover. There is a planned transition of the follow up role from the Evaluation Office to the Division for Strategic Planning and Results<sup>400</sup>.

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<sup>394</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>395</sup> Reports and publications. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/reports-and-publications>

<sup>396</sup> Evaluation Office at UNHCR – YouTube. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/@evaluationserviceatunhcr3330>

<sup>397</sup> UNHCR Evaluation Office 2023-2024 Year in Review Portal. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://unhcrevreport.my.canva.site/>

<sup>398</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>399</sup> UNHCR (2021), Step 6 – Management response.

<sup>400</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

## 10. UNICEF

### 10.1.1. DE architecture and its enabling environment

The architecture of UNICEF’s decentralized evaluation function is defined in the 2023 Revised Evaluation Policy of UNICEF<sup>401</sup>. Without formally defining “decentralized evaluation”, the term is understood as any evaluation exercise being commissioned and managed at either the regional or the country office level<sup>402</sup>. The presence of the decentralized evaluation function is reinforced in the 2022 Report of the accountability system of UNICEF<sup>403</sup>.

The DE governance is structured with the Director of Evaluation leading the function and reporting directly to the Executive Director, appointed with consultation from the Executive Board and Audit Advisory Committee. Each of UNICEF’s seven regions has a P5-level Regional Evaluation Adviser (REA) who reports directly to their Regional Director with a dotted line to the Director of Evaluation in HQ. These advisers provide guidance and support to a team of P4-level Country Evaluation Specialists (CES) and Multi-Country Evaluation Specialists (MCES). CES report directly to Country Representatives with a dotted reporting line to REA. MCES report to Regional Directors<sup>404</sup>. The policy also establishes roles for the latter actors, underscoring that evaluation is a shared responsibility.

Additionally, a Global Evaluation Committee, comprised of the entire Global Management Team, together with REA, and chaired by the Deputy Executive Director for Management, is the main body for discussing evaluation issues. UNICEF’s Evaluation Office at HQ offers technical support to the DE function through briefs, webinars, manuals, and an annual Global Evaluation Meeting to enhance the technical and strategic capacities of evaluation personnel.

## 10.2. Responsibilities for the DE function

### 10.2.1. Management arrangements

The Revised Evaluation Policy outlines the arrangements for different types of DE. Country Programme Evaluations (CPE) are managed by REA or MCES. Country office-level thematic evaluations, including cross-cutting themes, as well as Regional-level multi-country evaluations, can be managed by country or regional evaluation specialists. In the latter type of evaluations, UNICEF encourages the presence of stakeholders in management arrangements<sup>405</sup>. Since the rollout of the new Policy, country offices have also the possibility of conducting evaluative exercises, specifically evaluations related to country offices other than their own. However, the application of this policy depends significantly on the resources available to each country office<sup>406</sup>. Additionally, feedback indicates that so far, this has only happened at a pilot and limited scale, with implications for learning and workload<sup>407</sup>.

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<sup>401</sup> UNICEF (2023). Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF. E/ICEF/2023/27. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/revised-evaluation-policy-unicef-srs-2023>

<sup>402</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>403</sup> UNICEF (2022). Report of the accountability system of UNICEF. E/ICEF/2022/24. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/documents/report-accountability-system-unicef-srs-2022>

<sup>404</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>405</sup> UNICEF (2023), 25.

<sup>406</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>407</sup> Source: KII.

### **10.2.2. Evaluation planning**

To plan DE alongside country programmes, UNICEF mandates that all country offices prepare costed evaluation plans (CEP) that align with the duration of each country programme. Notably, these CEP are approved by the Executive Board (EB) concurrently with the country programmes. While these plans provide a structured framework for evaluations, they are also adaptable to changing circumstances and specific needs that may arise during the cycle, such as political changes or emerging issues like disability-focused evaluations.

Minimum coverage requirements are included in the Evaluation Policy. Specifically, CPE, which feed into the pending country programme document (CPD) and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), are required to be carried out at least once every two programme cycles, although they may be conducted more frequently if circumstances warrant. For small country offices, the Policy requires at least 3 country-level evaluations to be carried out every country programme cycle. For medium and large country offices, the requirement is at least one evaluation per year. At the regional level, the policy dictates a minimum of three regional thematic or multi-country evaluations and one institutional effectiveness evaluation per Strategic Plan cycle<sup>408</sup>.

Internal insights indicate that more engagement and coordination between REA and the Evaluation Office could improve synergies and complementarities of planning between DE and Global Evaluations, which often include case studies of CO or ROs<sup>409</sup>.

### **10.2.3. Financial resources**

As of January 2023, the Evaluation Office included 26 staff members based in HQ, as well as seven REA and multiple CES and MCES. Every country office has staff responsible for evaluation under the Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Section, or sometimes Social Policy, even if there is no dedicated CES. Usually there is a national M&E Specialist or Officer, or an evaluation focal point, depending on the size of the office<sup>410</sup>.

The Evaluation Pooled Fund covers two evaluation specialists in each region, while funding for any other staff is provided by country offices<sup>411</sup>. Annual non-staff evaluation expenditure ranged between USD 30-35 million<sup>412</sup>. Funding for DE is expected to constitute 1 percent of Country Programme budgets, typically sourced directly from project budgets. However, securing these funds can be challenging, with CO often facing shortfalls, particularly in smaller countries. In such cases, CO may request additional support from Regional Offices (RO) to bridge funding gaps, which are common with evaluations costing around USD 80,000-100,000. Increasingly, REA work on partnerships, including communities of practice with the scientific community, as well as on fundraising<sup>413</sup>.

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<sup>408</sup> UNICEF (2023), 25.

<sup>409</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>410</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>411</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>412</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>413</sup> Source: KII.

## 10.3. Quality controls

### 10.3.1. Quality assurance

UNICEF uses a diverse suite of tools to support the quality assurance of DE, including checklists, guidelines, and templates. These tools include checklists<sup>414</sup> and guidance on topics from managing real-time evaluations<sup>415</sup>, to conducting evaluability assessments<sup>416</sup>, and for including gender<sup>417</sup> and disability considerations.<sup>418</sup> A planned handbook, under development, aims to consolidate existing guidance, address any gaps, and refresh outdated tools in an easy format<sup>419</sup>. Feedback from internal sources indicates that the quality assurance of DE at UNICEF has shown significant improvement since the creation of CES and MCES positions, and that documenting performance improvements of the DE function would showcase the utility of evaluations<sup>420</sup>.

Quality assurance processes at UNICEF are managed by the evaluation manager, who is supported by various advisory groups and receives oversight from their supervisor. This comprehensive QA responsibility spans all phases of the evaluation process, from the design and terms of reference to the inception report and draft evaluation report. The DE process can include co-creative dynamics, especially when evaluators might not be fully acquainted with UNICEF's specific contexts or when they propose using particular evaluation methodologies. The involvement of the DE manager in this case helps tailor the evaluation to better meet organizational needs and to ensure that the methodologies used are appropriate and relevant for the context<sup>421</sup>.

### 10.3.2. Quality assessment

DE quality assessment at UNICEF is primarily conducted through its Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS)<sup>422</sup>. The GEROS system consists of the systematic and independent quality assessment of evaluation reports that have been uploaded to the corporate Evidence Information Systems Integration (EISI) database by DE commissioners. Following UNEG-adapted UNICEF quality standards, assessments of individual reports focus on the clarity of the evaluation's background, purpose, objectives, and scope; the appropriateness and ethical alignment of the methodology; the evidence-based nature of findings, conclusions, and recommendations; the contribution of lessons learned to organizational learning; the logical structure of the report; and the integration of gender equality as per the UN-SWAP evaluation performance indicator<sup>423</sup>.

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<sup>414</sup> UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/media/54786/file>

<sup>415</sup> Guidance and procedural note on managing real-time evaluations plus (RTE Plus). Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/guidance-and-procedural-note-managing-real-time-evaluations-plus-rte-plus>

<sup>416</sup> Guidance note for conducting evaluability assessments in UNICEF. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/guidance-note-conducting-evaluability-assessments-unicef>

<sup>417</sup> UNICEF guidance on gender integration in evaluation. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/unicef-guidance-gender-integration-evaluation>

<sup>418</sup> Disability-inclusive evaluations in UNICEF: Guideline for achieving UNDIS standards. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/disability-inclusive-evaluations-unicef-guideline-achieving-undis-standards>

<sup>419</sup> Source: agency-submitted template.

<sup>420</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>421</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>422</sup> UNICEF (2020). Global Evaluation Report Oversight System (GEROS) Handbook. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/global-evaluation-report-oversight-system-geros-handbook-2020>

<sup>423</sup> UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/unicef-adapted-uneq-evaluation-reports-standards>



Assessments are provided by an external company according to a 5-point scale, fed back to commissioning offices, and published online along with the reports<sup>424</sup>. Outcomes of the quality assessments are comprehensively reported in the Annual Report on the Evaluation Function of UNICEF (AREF), presented annually to the UNICEF Executive Board. In 2023, 59 per cent of the reports assessed were rated “satisfactory”, 18 per cent were “highly satisfactory”, and 2 per cent were “exceptional”<sup>425</sup>.

## 10.4. Ensuring impartiality and transparency

The Evaluation Policy commits to maintain an impartial UNICEF evaluation function “at all levels, with management affording it the necessary latitude and resourcing to accomplish its mission”<sup>426</sup>. Impartiality at DE is primarily safeguarded using external consultants as evaluators. Evaluators are hired in a way to ensure they have no prior involvement or personal stake, and the procurement is open and competitive to ensure transparency.

The mechanisms to ensure impartiality are designed to be participatory, involving diverse stakeholders to mitigate bias. Advisory groups, reference groups, advisory groups or expert panels, comprising governments, implementing partners and civil society counterparts, are often established and encouraged by the Evaluation Office to further ensure impartiality and transparency throughout the evaluation process<sup>427</sup>. The involvement of vulnerable groups, children and young people<sup>428</sup> follow UNICEF ethical guidelines<sup>429</sup>.

All DE reports are published on the UNICEF evaluation website and included in the GEROS, along with their corresponding management response. The responsibility to upload to GEROS lies with the evaluation manager, with the Evaluation Office conducting periodic checks to ensure compliance. In rare cases where there are concerns about publishing a specific evaluation, the country representative must seek approval for an exemption from the Director of Evaluation<sup>430</sup>.

## 10.5. Professional standards and capacity

Decentralized evaluations at UNICEF are managed by evaluation professionals. Required skills for this role include an extensive professional background in evaluation, including practical experience planning, implementation and use of evaluations; proven knowledge and understanding of evaluation policies, procedures and practices; and excellent knowledge of research and evaluation methodologies<sup>431</sup>.

DE are conducted by external evaluation teams. In 2023, UNICEF established a long-term agreement (LTA) roster of institutional evaluators, making it easier for colleagues, particularly at the decentralized level, to identify qualified evaluators. Feedback indicates that the LTA is infrequently utilized for DE due to several

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<sup>424</sup> Evaluation Reports. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/reports#/>

<sup>425</sup> UNICEF (2024a). Annual report for 2023 on the evaluation function in UNICEF (Annual session 2024).

E/ICEF/2024/20. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/documents/unicef-evaluation-function-annual-report-as-2024>

<sup>426</sup> UNICEF (2023), 18 (a).

<sup>427</sup> UNICEF (2023), 28.

<sup>428</sup> UNICEF guidance note: Adolescent participation in UNICEF monitoring and evaluation. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/unicef-guidance-note-adolescent-participation-unicef-monitoring-and-evaluation>

<sup>429</sup> UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/unicef-procedure-ethical-standards-research-evaluation-data-collection-and-analysis>

<sup>430</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>431</sup> From the TOR of a Multi-Country Evaluation Specialist.



issues. Firstly, the costs associated with firms on the list are prohibitively high; secondly, firms listed may show a lack of interest for DE; and thirdly, not all firms possess the necessary contextual capacity for DE<sup>432</sup>.

REA and the Evaluation Office also offer ad hoc support to CES and MCES in selecting skilled consultants for specific evaluations upon request<sup>433</sup>. Internal feedback indicates that in the ongoing effort by CES and MCES to strengthen national evaluation capacity, and to identify more quality and contextual findings, evaluation teams increasingly rely on local skills, including through earmarked roles, such as those for young and emerging evaluators, or by requiring national evaluation team leaders<sup>434</sup>.

The Evaluation Office and REA facilitate evaluation capacity development by offering a range of opportunities to enhance evaluation skills. These include webinars, online courses, and platforms for evaluation practice exchange, supplemented by individualized support and guidance. UNICEF maintains a collection of webinars and other video resources in the UNICEF Evaluation YouTube channel<sup>435</sup>. The Evaluation Office provides two e-learning courses on humanitarian evaluation<sup>436</sup> and one course on Development Evaluation<sup>437</sup>.

## 10.6. Utility, use, and follow-up

### 10.6.1. Use of evaluation findings

The revised Evaluation Policy highlights the need to maximize evaluation use, stating that every “evaluative exercise is undertaken with the aim of being meaningfully used”<sup>438</sup>. UNICEF has increasingly emphasized the importance of developing communications strategies for every exercise, ideally early in the evaluation planning and design stages, specifically targeting foreseen users and uses of the evaluations. At the DE level, the role of REA includes enhancing evaluation use, ensuring that the evaluation policy is well understood, socialized, and implemented in their region<sup>439</sup>.

In 2024, the Evaluation Office has launched the Evaluation Communication Advocacy Strategy to enhance visibility and use of evaluative evidence, influencing decision-makers and stakeholders<sup>440</sup>. The strategy aims to elevate the understanding and ownership of UNICEF’s evaluation function, to improve the systematic use of evaluation evidence in decision-making, and to boost the demand for such evidence by showing its utility. To this end, the strategy outlines communication activities to heighten visibility and advocacy to underscore the value of evaluations.

### 10.6.2. Management response

While evaluation teams are tasked with clearly communicating key findings and offering actionable recommendations, users of the evaluation – the evaluand - are responsible for implementing these

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<sup>432</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>433</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>434</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>435</sup> UNICEF Evaluation YouTube channel. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgt-gUfk9OXlugvLhxL4GrQ>

<sup>436</sup> Introducing evaluation of humanitarian action. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://ecourses.evalpartners.org/ecourses/course-details/16> ; Evaluation in Humanitarian Settings. Retrieved from <https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=29>

<sup>437</sup> e-Courses programme in Development Evaluation. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://ecourses.evalpartners.org/>

<sup>438</sup> UNICEF (2023), 34.

<sup>439</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>440</sup> UNICEF (2024b). Evaluation Communication Advocacy Strategy. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/evaluation-communication-advocacy-strategy>

recommendations. This accountability starts with the management response, which is required for all DE. Management response states the feedback to the evaluation, their acceptance level of each recommendation, and an action plan with specific measures and timelines. Management response actions are monitored by the most operational units. The Evaluation Office has developed guidance on developing and tracking management response<sup>441</sup>.

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<sup>441</sup> UNICEF (2018). Evaluation Management Response Guidance. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unicef.org/media/54801/file>

## 11. UN Women

### 11.1. Evaluation architecture and enabling environment

A definition of DE in UN Women is provided by its 2020 Evaluation Policy<sup>442</sup>. DEs are aimed to “assess issues of significance at the programmatic level” and serve as inputs for corporate evaluations and UNSDCF evaluations. These evaluations are managed by programme officers, usually M&E focal points, and conducted by independent external evaluators. Regional- and country-level portfolio evaluations (CPE) are separately referred to in the Policy as “independent evaluations” and as such are led and conducted by the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) with the support of external evaluators where necessary.

The IES, which reports directly to the UN Women Executive Director and presents Annual Reports on Evaluation to the Executive Board<sup>443</sup>, oversees the entire evaluation function. Located in regional offices, six Regional Evaluation Specialists (P4 level) report both functionally and administratively to the Chief of IES, enabling independence from regional directors. This structure has been consolidated over time, ensuring that the evaluation function remains distinct from other operational and monitoring roles. UN Women was one of the early adopters of regional evaluation positions before other UN entities adopted similar models<sup>444</sup>.

RES manage strategic DE at the regional and country levels. The IES, particularly through its RES, provides significant technical support and quality assurance for DE.

### 11.2. Responsibilities for the DE Function

#### 11.2.1. *Management arrangements*

The Evaluation Policy outlines roles and responsibilities at all levels of the organization for both corporate and decentralized evaluations. Its Regional Evaluation Specialists both lead and conduct evaluations such as regional and country portfolio evaluations (CPE). They also oversee country-level decentralized evaluation processes. Other key responsibilities<sup>445</sup> include the strengthening of evaluation systems in regional offices, the promotion of evaluation use, the strengthening of evaluation capacity development, as well as UN inter-agency coordination work, particularly on joint evaluations and gender mainstreaming across UNSDCF and system-wide evaluations. In some regional offices, RES may be supported by temporary staff, consultants or UNVs to plan and manage evaluations, according to demand<sup>446</sup>.

At country level, evaluation focal points/officers manage DEs and implement evaluation plans. They report to their line manager within the same office, with no direct nor dotted reporting line to either RES or the IES. Their duties include to coordinate, support and disseminate all evaluation-related work of the programmatic office. As evaluation task managers, they are responsible for the overall management of individual evaluations,

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<sup>442</sup> UN Women (2020). Evaluation policy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. UNW/2020/5/Rev.1 Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/08/evaluation-policy-of-the-united-nations-entity-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women>

<sup>443</sup> About us\_ Evaluation\_ Governance of the evaluation function at UN Women \_ UN Women – Headquarters. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/accountability/evaluation/governance-and-policy#eb>

<sup>444</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>445</sup> Full terms of reference (TOR) for a UN Women Regional Evaluation Specialist are available at [https://jobs.undp.org/cj\\_view\\_job.cfm?cur\\_job\\_id=115205](https://jobs.undp.org/cj_view_job.cfm?cur_job_id=115205)

<sup>446</sup> Source: KII. TOR for a UN Women Regional Evaluation Consultant are available at [https://jobs.undp.org/cj\\_view\\_job.cfm?cur\\_job\\_id=117444](https://jobs.undp.org/cj_view_job.cfm?cur_job_id=117444)

with the coordination of RES. Focal points and task managers are appointed by senior management staff (Deputy Executive Directors, Division Directors, Regional Directors or country Representatives).

### **11.2.2. Evaluation planning**

Regional and country portfolio evaluations are planned systematically by the IES through a quadrennial process that includes a Corporate Evaluation Plan (CEP)<sup>447</sup> approved by the Executive Director. These plans are aligned with strategic priorities, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). They can be periodically reviewed and updated to reflect emerging priorities, context and organizational learning needs.

Other decentralized evaluations are planned by country focal points in the context of multi-year regional and country specific programming (“Strategic Note”) preparation as well as during annual work plan and project design processes.

For all types of evaluations, planning criteria are provided by Evaluation Coverage Norms and defined in the latest CEP, and provide coverage while allowing flexibility to prioritize according to programming needs<sup>448</sup>. Regional Evaluation Specialists are responsible for monitoring the implementation of evaluation plans at regional and country levels.

Country portfolio evaluations (CPEs) are mandatory in alternate cycles – but recommended to be carried out every cycle<sup>449</sup>, particularly if monitoring or audit points to a significant shift in the context or risk levels – and are sequenced to inform subsequent programming as well as UNSDCF. The minimum frequency of regional evaluations is determined in the development of the regional Strategic Note. In each programming cycle, there needs to be from two to four country thematic evaluations, Strategic Note component evaluations or project evaluations<sup>450</sup>.

### **11.2.3. Financial resources**

UN Women allocates between 2 and 3 percent of its total programme expenditure to the evaluation function, including DEs. RES salaries are covered by IES, providing stability. Where funding allows, RES are supported by additional temporary staff, UNV, or consultants whose cost is covered by regional offices<sup>451</sup>.

Resource allocation decisions for regional and CPEs are based on the country and regional costed evaluation plans. The lack of a centralized budget for evaluations is seen as a challenge, while having the possibility of allocating resources through cost recovery may help deliver evaluations more effectively<sup>452</sup>. However, a small share of CPEs is partially funded by IES or supported by a matching fund in offices with limited resources. In other cases, RES can provide advice in the planning stage about how much budget to allocate

As per Evaluation Policy, the Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that IES is adequately staffed and resourced, while responsibility for human and financial resources at DE level lays with senior management. The challenge of securing sufficient budget allocations for evaluations is persistent, especially in country

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<sup>447</sup> UN Women (2022a). 2022-2025 Corporate Evaluation Plan (CEP). Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UN-Women-IES-Corporate-evaluation-plan-2022-2025-en.pdf>

<sup>448</sup> Source: KII

<sup>449</sup> Source: KII

<sup>450</sup> UN Women (2022a).

<sup>451</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>452</sup> Source: KII.

offices. However, UN Women mitigates these resource constraints by leveraging the internal salary of RESs to lead evaluations, making evaluations relatively cost-effective compared to externally commissioned ones.

### **11.3. Quality controls**

#### **11.3.1. Quality assurance**

UN Women has a diverse system for ensuring the quality of decentralized evaluations. RESs are responsible for providing hands-on guidance and capacity building to evaluation managers, often through regular training including on-site sessions, throughout the evaluation cycle (planning, preparation, conduct, reporting and use and follow up) as well as with a series of standards, tools, and templates such as “Evaluation process standards for decentralized evaluation” and “GERAAS evaluation report quality assessment checklist”, included in the UN Women Evaluation Handbook<sup>453</sup>. RES also assess the quality of key evaluation products such as TORs, inception reports and draft/final evaluation reports.

Evaluation quality is further enhanced through additional internal and external assessments, which apply consistent standards across all evaluations. The quality assurance process of regional and CPEs –led and conducted by RES with support by external consultants - is performed through an Internal Peer Review Mechanism which includes HQ-based evaluation specialists, other RES, staff from the Internal Audit Service – on efficiency topics – with a “final layer” of QA by the Chief of Evaluation and Director of IEAS.

#### **11.3.2. Quality assessment**

All decentralized evaluation reports – whether large or small - are quality-assessed using the Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS)<sup>454</sup> and their results are presented at the annual session of the Executive Board. The overall quality of evaluation reports is also one of the KPIs (percentage of evaluation reports rated “Good and above” (%)) collected through the Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS). The scores of evaluations have improved in recent years, reportedly owing to the increasing involvement and follow up by RES<sup>455</sup>.

### **11.4. Ensuring impartiality and transparency**

UN Women has several mechanisms in place to promote impartiality in evaluations. These safeguards are provided in the Evaluation Policy and the IEAS Charter<sup>456</sup> and with regards to decentralized level, they are primarily directed to strategic regional and country portfolio evaluations. These evaluations are led by RES, with independent reporting lines from programme management, and with the support of external consultants – with no prior involvement in project design, formulation, implementation or monitoring - where specific skill sets are needed. In decentralized evaluations, the policy requires that evaluation managers should not be the manager of the programme being evaluated or, at a minimum, not have individual decision-making authority in evaluation processes. All decentralized evaluations are conducted by individual independent

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<sup>453</sup> For a full list of the tools and standards, see UN Women (2022b). Evaluation Handbook: How to manage gender-responsive evaluation. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/05/un-women-evaluation-handbook-2022>

<sup>454</sup> UN Women (2021). Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) Guidance. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Evaluation-GERAAS-guidance-2021-en.pdf>

<sup>455</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>456</sup> UN Women (2024). Charter of the Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/UN-Women-Charter-of-the-Independent-Evaluation-Audit-and-Investigation-Services-en.pdf>

evaluators. Additional safeguards include the Evaluation Management Group, Evaluation Reference Group, a peer review mechanism for strategic evaluations, and the independent review of final evaluation reports by external assessors.

Decentralized evaluations are conducted in consultation with national stakeholders and UN agencies. The Evaluation Policy emphasizes engaging stakeholders throughout the evaluation process to ensure transparency and inclusiveness. The results of decentralized evaluations are presented at the annual session of the Executive Board. Finally, all decentralized evaluation reports, together with terms of reference and management responses are made publicly available through the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE) system<sup>457</sup>.

## 11.5. Professional standards and capacity

Staff responsible for designing, conducting and managing regional and country portfolio evaluations are P4-level Regional Evaluation Specialists. The skills required to apply to this role include<sup>458</sup> expertise in evaluation methodologies, UNEG Norms and Standards, and gender-responsive evaluation approaches; skills in questionnaire design, sampling techniques, interviewing, data collection; knowledge about gender equality and women's human rights; and experience managing consultants, providing training, and fostering partnerships, as shown by the years of progressively responsible experience, including fieldwork, in managing and conducting strategic evaluations.

Staff responsible for managing country-level decentralized evaluations are monitoring and evaluation focal points, who do not necessarily have evaluation background. To ensure professionalism, IES develops their capacity through a dedicated coaching programme, supplemented by regional face-to-face training, and a series of webinars<sup>459</sup>. Efforts are constant amidst reportedly high levels of staff turnover<sup>460</sup>. Additionally, the IES has developed the online eLearning course "How to Manage Gender-responsive Evaluation"<sup>461</sup> aimed at developing core competencies for UN Women staff, and the Evaluation Handbook<sup>462</sup>.

Country-level decentralized evaluations are conducted by external evaluators. To ensure they meet the levels of thematic and professional expertise required, evaluators are recruited through open and competitive processes, although desk review provisions for individual consultants are also possible and frequently used. In regional and country portfolio evaluations, RES lead or take part in the recruitment. Long Term Agreements (LTAs) and consultant rosters help expand the pool, expedite the recruitment process and improve the quality<sup>463</sup>.

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<sup>457</sup> <https://gate.unwomen.org/>

<sup>458</sup> Full terms of reference (TOR) for a UN Women Regional Evaluation Specialist are available at [https://jobs.undp.org/cj\\_view\\_job.cfm?cur\\_job\\_id=115205](https://jobs.undp.org/cj_view_job.cfm?cur_job_id=115205)

<sup>459</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>460</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>461</sup> How to Manage Gender-responsive Evaluation – Portal – UN Women Training Centre – Portal. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://portal.trainingcentre.unwomen.org/product/how-to-manage-gender-responsive-evaluation/>

<sup>462</sup> UN Women (2022b).

<sup>463</sup> Source: KII.

## **11.6. Utility, use, and follow-up**

### **11.6.1. Use of evaluation findings**

UN Woman has increasingly focused on enhancing use and utility of their evaluations. Efforts on enhancing use are ongoing<sup>464</sup>. In the context of regional and CPEs, a dissemination strategy is embedded in the evaluation process, to make sure that events – such as workshops or webinars – are planned in advance.

### **11.6.2. Management response**

The GATE system ensures public access to all evaluation-related documents. It also displays the evaluation Management Response (MRs) and related committed actions, which is mandatory for all evaluations in UN Women. Heads of Offices are accountable for ensuring timely responses and follow-up on recommendations, with guidance and templates for MR provided in the Evaluation Handbook. Tracking the status of MR implementation is carried out by IES through its Global Evaluation Oversight System (GEOS).

A number of use-related KPIs are also present in the GEOS system: management response submission (percentage of completed evaluation reports submitted with management response to GATE (%)); Implementation of management responses (percentage of management response key actions being implemented (%)); use of evaluation (percentage of offices that reported using evaluation (%)).

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<sup>464</sup> Source: KII. These initiatives include: The use of evaluation results in corporate governance, including by executive and senior management; The development of tailored knowledge products; The use of innovative dissemination methods. In addition, the IES developed a communication and knowledge management strategy, established an internal evaluation community of practice and produces meta-synthesis of both corporate and DEs.



## 12. WFP

### 12.1. DE architecture and its enabling environment

DE within WFP are defined by the 2022 Evaluation Policy as evaluations commissioned by COs, regional bureaus (RB), or HQ divisions other than the Office of Evaluation (OEV). They can cover activities, pilots, themes, transfer modalities or any other area of action at the subnational, national or multi-country level<sup>465</sup>. DE are conducted by external evaluators and adhere to a comprehensive normative framework that includes the Evaluation Policy, the 2022 Evaluation Strategy<sup>466</sup>, and the 2023 Evaluation Charter<sup>467</sup>, as well as multiple Regional Evaluation Strategies (RES). This framework outlines strategic directions, governance, operational guidelines, and institutional arrangements.

The DE architecture operates across multiple levels including HQ, RB, and CO, each playing a role. At the HQ level, the Director of Evaluation (DOE), appointed by the Executive Director with approval from the Executive Board, leads the OEV, an independent evaluation function, which includes a dedicated Capacity and Quality Unit (CapQual) of 6-7 staff members<sup>468</sup> supporting the DE function and ensuring cross-regional learning. This unit offers guidance, manages support mechanisms, and coordinates with other units to ensure synergies and complementarity with centralized evaluations.

At the regional level, six P4-level Regional Evaluation Officers (REO) lead the development and implementation of the RES and provide guidance and advice to DE<sup>469</sup> together with 2-3 supporting staff members<sup>470</sup>, forming Regional Evaluation Units (REU). REO report directly to RB, either the Regional Director or the Deputy Director, while maintaining a functional reporting line to a OEV Senior Evaluation Officer (head of CapQual). Corporate budget constraints, which may affect RB but not OEV, are likely to lead to a downsizing of REU from 3-4 staff members to 2<sup>471</sup>. Anticipating financial constraints, REU are exploring alternative staffing solutions like JPOs, UNVs, and YEEs to maintain operational capacity<sup>472</sup>.

At the CO level, country-led DE are often managed by M&E officers, whose reporting lines can vary<sup>473</sup>. Notably, Ethiopia serves as an exception where a dedicated country evaluation officer is specifically assigned to manage DE in a very large CO<sup>474</sup>. Otherwise, competing priorities at both RB and CO levels reportedly strain the focus on evaluation tasks for REU and M&E officers, with staff involved in DE at times diverted to other duties as requested by their reporting lines<sup>475</sup>.

Additional institutional arrangements such as the Evaluation Function Steering Group (EFSG), chaired by the Deputy Executive Director, and Regional Evaluation Committees (REC), chaired by Regional Directors,

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<sup>465</sup> WFP (2022a). WFP Evaluation Policy 2022, 14. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-evaluation-policy-2022>

<sup>466</sup> WFP (2022b). WFP Evaluation Strategy 2022. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-evaluation-strategy-2022>

<sup>467</sup> WFP (2023a). WFP Evaluation Charter 2023. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-evaluation-charter-2023>

<sup>468</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>469</sup> From the Terms of Reference of WFP Regional Evaluation Officers.

<sup>470</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>471</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>472</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>473</sup> WFP (2023b). Decentralized Evaluation Guidance for Process and Content. Decentralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/deqas-decentralized-evaluation-quality-assurance-system-guidance-materials-0>

<sup>474</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>475</sup> Source: KII.

support the implementation and integrity of DE processes across WFP<sup>476</sup>. Discussions with internal staff underscore the importance of REC for DE processes, thanks to the backing of decision-makers like Regional and Country Directors<sup>477</sup>.

The WFP Evaluation Strategy includes key indicators for monitoring the implementation of the Evaluation Policy and achievement of results on DE. Each year, OEV reports on the status of the evaluation function, including DE, in its annual report<sup>478</sup>.

## 12.2. Responsibilities for the DE function

### 12.2.1. Management arrangements

In WFP, the responsibility for appointing an evaluation manager for DE lies with the Director or Deputy Director of the commissioning office. Evaluation managers can be appointed from within CO, RB, or HQ. The choice is made by balancing various considerations, including the scope of evaluation, and individual skills and capacities<sup>479</sup>.

For CO-led evaluations, the M&E officer within the CO is typically appointed to manage DE, provided they are not directly involved in the intervention being evaluated. If a CO lacks an M&E officer with sufficient capacity, or if the staff is too involved in the intervention under evaluation, alternative options include appointing a Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) officer, a risk management officer, or even sourcing an evaluation manager from another CO.

WFP policies on mobility and staff rotation, while beneficial for knowledge transfer across regions, can reportedly present an additional challenge for identifying suitable DE managers, and for maintaining capacity, according to internal insights. To counteract the challenges posed by high turnover and staff with less experience in DE management when a DE was previously planned, REU may co-manage DE<sup>480</sup>.

Finally, in cases where no suitable internal candidates are available, DE management can be outsourced to an external consultant or firm, though this is considered a last resort due to its limited impact on building internal evaluation capacities<sup>481</sup>.

RB-led evaluations usually have an evaluation manager appointed from the REU, who is familiar with the thematic area of the evaluation. This manager works closely with CO involved in multi-country DEs, supported by an evaluation committee comprising representatives from each involved CO and RB. OEV also suggests having alternate or co-evaluation managers to cover any gaps due to turnover or extended absences of the primary evaluation manager, to maintain continuity and safeguarding quality<sup>482</sup>.

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<sup>476</sup> WFP (2023a), D. Institutional arrangements.

<sup>477</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>478</sup> WFP (2024). Annual Evaluation Report 2023. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/annual-evaluation-report-2023>

<sup>479</sup> A template for the evaluation manager's TOR is available at <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000002705/download/>

<sup>480</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>481</sup> WFP (2023b), 1.5.

<sup>482</sup> WFP (2023b), 1.5.

## 12.2.2. Evaluation planning

Planning for DE at WFP is part of the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) formulation at country level, to ensure that DE align with strategic goals and needs. The responsibility for DE planning lies primarily with the CO Directors, who, in collaboration with their teams and RB, decide the number, type, timing, and scope of DE based on norms, learning needs and stakeholder interests, including donors. A number of criteria, including relevance, level of expenditure, feasibility, and evidence gaps, are considered to guide the decision-making process<sup>483</sup>.

The WFP approach to DE is described by internal sources as “demand-led”<sup>484</sup>. Coverage norms only require each CO to plan for one DE within each CSP cycle, which typically spans 3-5 years, while larger CO are encouraged to undertake multiple DEs. There are no specific coverage norms for RB-led or HQ-led DE. OEV and REU encourages CO to consider the right evidence-generating tool, not just evaluation, by looking at learning needs, past evidence and nature of programming, avoiding a “compliance/norms” orientation<sup>485</sup>. The CO should ensure that all planned evaluations are reflected in the appropriate evidence-generating plan, which should identify requirements for all assessments, baselines, monitoring, review, and evaluations in a coordinated way.

Country-level plans for DE, along with those commissioned by the RB and HQ in a specific region, are ultimately consolidated by the REU into Regional Evaluation Plans (REPs), which are submitted annually to OEV for review and REC for endorsement. To avoid overlaps and ensuring complementarity between DE and with other exercises such as the CSP mid-term review, the centralized CSP evaluation and other reviews, REU support the sequencing of these exercises<sup>486</sup>.

While the demand-led approach offers flexibility and relevance, it can also complicate DE staff allocation, as the variable number of evaluations occurring each year reportedly poses challenges in resource planning<sup>487</sup>. Feedback from internal sources indicates a high turnover of evaluation managers at the CO level, potentially exacerbated by the length of the DE process. Officially, DE are expected to be completed within 7.5 months from preparation to report approval, but in practice, they can extend up to 13.5 months<sup>488</sup>.

While WFP rotation policies enhance career progression and capacity building for national staff, they may also lead to institutional memory loss, occasionally leading to confusion over previously established evaluation plans, as reflected by internal feedback<sup>489</sup>.

Evaluation plans are adaptive to the fluid, fast-moving context in which WFP operates. Sometimes, CO with high numbers of evaluations often face additional requests for DE from donors, posing some difficulties in management arrangements<sup>490</sup>. Conversations from internal sources suggest that the allocation of voluntary contributions has led in the past to an overrepresentation of certain thematic areas in DE due to targeted funding<sup>491</sup>. Over the course of the CSP cycle, evaluation needs can be revisited periodically, including during the annual planning process (APP).

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<sup>483</sup> WFP (2023b), Box 2: Criteria to guide decision making for decentralized evaluations.

<sup>484</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>485</sup> WFP (2023b), 1.1.

<sup>486</sup> WFP Technical Note - Evaluative products. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from

[https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000130020/download/?\\_ga=2.236908161.1048366439.1731773126-1380782933.1705669719](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000130020/download/?_ga=2.236908161.1048366439.1731773126-1380782933.1705669719)

<sup>487</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>488</sup> WFP (2023b), 65.

<sup>489</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>490</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>491</sup> Source: KII.

### **12.2.3. Financial resources**

Financial provisions set forth in the Evaluation Policy indicate approximately 0.6 percent of WFP's total contribution income to support evaluation<sup>492</sup>. The DE function is funded through several separate funding sources, covering different types of DE activities. The conduct and management of DE, including both staff time and implementation costs, is covered by Country Portfolio Budgets (CPB). The average DE at WFP costs around USD 130,000, ranging from USD 90,000 to USD 250,000, depending on scope and complexity<sup>493</sup>. In the programme design stage, REU exert some influence over budget allocations for evaluations, by making sure that evaluation budgets are integrated into project proposals, that the planned evaluation budget is adequate, and that evaluation activities are appropriate relative to other potential evidence-generating tools<sup>494</sup>. Additionally, REO engage in resource mobilization by working closely with the partnership team to ensure evaluations are financially supported<sup>495</sup>.

Operational and staff expenditures for OEV staff, as well as for each REU, are covered by Programme Support and Administrative resources (PSA)<sup>496</sup>. Additionally, for COs facing financial constraints that could impede the conduct of planned and budgeted DE, a multilateral Contingency Evaluation Fund (CEF) is available to provide support. Governed by the EFSG according to agreed eligibility and assessment criteria<sup>497</sup>, the CEF is hosted by OEV and serves as a last resort to mitigate the impact of funding shortfalls, which are a risk given WFP's reliance on voluntary contribution. Eligibility criteria include that the activities subject to evaluation have been funded at least 30 percent and below 80 percent, and that the CO can cover at least 30 percent of the evaluation costs<sup>498</sup>. In 2023, the CEF allocated USD 785,988 to support DE<sup>499</sup>.

## **12.3. Quality controls**

### **12.3.1. Quality assurance**

The primary means of ensuring DE quality at WFP is the Decentralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System (DEQAS). This package, developed by OEV, includes a detailed Process Guide<sup>500</sup> for DE evaluation managers, alongside a mini guide for DE commissioners, a suite of technical notes<sup>501</sup>, and a series of templates and checklists<sup>502</sup>, available in multiple languages.

The primary responsibility for QA lies with the evaluation managers, who receive support from REO responsible for secondary QA. Further oversight is provided by the CapQual team for RB-led and HQ-led DE. Additionally, an outsourced DE quality support service (DEQS), funded and managed by OEV, conducts

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<sup>492</sup> WFP (2022a), 59.

<sup>493</sup> WFP (2023b), 60.

<sup>494</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>495</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>496</sup> WFP (2022a), Table 5 - The WFP Evaluation Function Funding Model.

<sup>497</sup> WFP (2023a), D. Institutional arrangements.

<sup>498</sup> Info Brief WFP Support Mechanisms for Decentralized Evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000013213/download/>

<sup>499</sup> Evaluation Work Plan 2025-2027 Presentation by WFP Office of Evaluation, May 2024. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from [https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document\\_download/WFP-0000149438](https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document_download/WFP-0000149438)

<sup>500</sup> WFP (2023b).

<sup>501</sup> A partial list of technical notes (TN) includes Evaluative Products; evaluation approaches, methods and tools for DE; principles, norms and standards for evaluations; joint evaluation; stakeholder analysis; evaluation matrix; criteria and questions; integrating gender in WFP evaluations; quality of evaluation recommendations; DE types. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/eqas-evaluation-quality-assurance-system-0>

<sup>502</sup> TOR template; Inception report template; Evaluation report template; Management response template; TOR quality checklist; Inception report quality checklist; Evaluation report quality checklist. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/deqas-decentralized-evaluation-quality-assurance-system-guidance-materials-0>

impartial assessments of all draft DE TOR, inception reports, and evaluation reports against a set of criteria. A DE Help Desk provides technical advice and support to CO, RB and HQ divisions/units, on evaluation enquiries that might arise during different phases of the DE process.

Each DE also incorporates an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)<sup>503</sup>, consisting of key stakeholders who review and provide feedback on draft deliverables, and an Evaluation Committee<sup>504</sup> chaired by the Director of the commissioning office, responsible for decision-making and approval of final deliverables.

The Office of Evaluation regularly updates the DEQAS based on feedback from evaluation users, reflections with the service providers, and to reflect changes and keep pace with emerging practices from the evaluation community<sup>505</sup>.

### **12.3.2. Quality assessment**

The quality of all completed DE undergoes a post-hoc quality assessment (PHQA) process to ensure that they meet established evaluation quality standards<sup>506</sup>. This independent assessment, managed by the Office of Evaluation (OEV), evaluates final evaluation reports based on a set of eight criteria including methodology, analysis, findings, conclusions, and recommendations<sup>507</sup>. The PHQA provides a score for the report's integration of gender, equity, and inclusion following WFP's reporting obligations under the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality (UN-SWAP) and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UN-DIS).

The PHQA process also serves for organizational accountability and transparency. The Director of OEV and Directors of the DE Commissioning Offices are accountable for reviewing quality assessment reports on completed evaluations and taking actions to enhance future evaluation quality<sup>508</sup>. The contracted firm prepares an Annual Post-Hoc Quality Assessment Report (APSR) which provides a meta-analysis of the external assessments<sup>509</sup>. Results of the PHQA assessments are made public alongside the evaluations on the WFP website and are summarized in the annual evaluation report to the Executive Board. In 2023, 83 out of 86 DE evaluations were rated "highly satisfactory" or "satisfactory"<sup>510</sup>.

## **12.4. Ensuring impartiality and transparency**

The Evaluation Policy emphasizes the importance of impartiality and transparency, including for DE<sup>511</sup>. From the onset of a DE, the Director of the commissioning office is responsible for the application of impartiality provisions<sup>512</sup>. Impartiality in DE is safeguarded through several mechanisms.

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<sup>503</sup> Technical Note on Evaluation Reference Group. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000003175/download/>

<sup>504</sup> Technical Note on Evaluation Committee. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000003174/download/>

<sup>505</sup> WFP (2023b), Foreword.

<sup>506</sup> Post-Hoc Quality Assessment For Evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/post-hoc-quality-assessment-evaluations>

<sup>507</sup> WFP (2023b), STEP 6.3 Submit Evaluation Report For Post Hoc Quality Assessment.

<sup>508</sup> WFP (2023a), B. Governance, oversight and leadership of the evaluation function.

<sup>509</sup> Expression of Interest (EOI) HQ23NF414-EOI for the provision of Post-Hoc Quality Assessment (PHQA) Services. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/209336>

<sup>510</sup> WFP (2024), Post-hoc quality assessment.

<sup>511</sup> WFP (2022), 24.

<sup>512</sup> WFP (2022), 24.



DE are conducted by external independent evaluators. The DEQAS includes specific guidance on how to assess potential conflicts of interest during the recruitment of evaluation teams. Evaluators should be given full access to all relevant information required for the evaluation<sup>513</sup>.

REU promote and maintain impartiality by providing guidance and support to CO, intervening when impartiality breaches are detected. OEV emphasizes proactive engagement with senior management to clarify and manage evaluation impartiality and independence, highlighting risks like the appointment of involved personnel as managers, and advocating for strategic oversight roles for REU to safeguard evaluation integrity<sup>514</sup>. Once appointed, evaluation managers are requested to sign the UNEG Pledge of Ethical Conduct and a Confidentiality Agreement, and then ensure that the evaluation team also signs these documents at the contracting stage.

The provisions for ERG and the Evaluation Committee enable separate decision-making lines, designed to prevent undue influence over the key evaluation decisions, considering the lack of structural independence at CO level<sup>515</sup>. The use of an outsourced DE Quality Support service offers an additional layer of QA especially for less experienced DE evaluation managers. The application of external PHQA across all DE is also aimed to ensure the credibility of evaluation findings.

WFP also maintains a number of provisions to ensure transparency in its DE process. All finalized DE reports are published on the WFP website<sup>516</sup>. OEV also maintains an evaluation management information system (MIS) that serves as a repository for all evaluation-related information, including titles, types, budgets, timelines, geographical coverage, and team members, updated regularly by REU and CapQual. The creation of ERG is another provision to ensure transparency in DE. ERG are composed of internal and external stakeholders who provide feedback on evaluation drafts and contribute to the evaluation process, aiming to ensure a broader ownership and stakeholder engagement<sup>517</sup>. Internal feedback suggests that the engagement of national partners in DE is strong, and there are ideas to expand ERG memberships even further broader groups, for instance representatives of local communities, teachers, and parents in ERG of school feeding programme DE<sup>518</sup>.

## 12.5. Professional standards and capacity

WFP's commitment to enhancing internal evaluation capacity is outlined in its Evaluation Policy<sup>519</sup>. The 2020 Evaluation Capacity Development Strategy sets out the vision and key priorities and initiatives for evaluation capacity strengthening across WFP<sup>520</sup>. Integral to this strategy is the EvalPro Evaluation Learning Programme (EvalPro), which is designed to target staff across multiple roles and functions, from general awareness to the management of DE.

This programme includes four online courses, from introductory modules for general staff (EvalPro 1) to learning series for Directors of DE commissioning offices (EvalPro 2), functional summaries for supporting functions such as procurement, finance, and programming (EvalPro 3), and a comprehensive training

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<sup>513</sup> Technical Note on Independence and Impartiality. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/7b5a83f73adc45fea8417db452c1040b/download/>

<sup>514</sup> WFP (2023b), 1.4.

<sup>515</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>516</sup> Publications WFP. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.wfp.org/publications>

<sup>517</sup> Technical Note on Evaluation Reference Group. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000003175/download/>

<sup>518</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>519</sup> WFP (2022), 22.

<sup>520</sup> WFP (2020). WFP Evaluation Capacity Development Strategy (2020-2024). Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-evaluation-capacity-development-strategy-2020-2024>

programme for DE managers (EvalPro 4). The strategy places particular emphasis on building an “evaluation cadre”, a group of staff who work on evaluation full-time, or periodically at country level managing evaluations, that is fit for purpose<sup>521</sup>. However, one challenge in capacity development at the CO level highlighted by CapQual is the high staff turnover due to the WFP rotation/mobility policy, which impacts continuity and necessitating frequent evaluation training of new personnel<sup>522</sup>.

To ensure the professionalism and capacities of external consultants and evaluators, OEV adopts a systematic, diverse recruitment strategy, using different procurement mechanisms: LTA with a pool of service providers, individual consultant contracts, and open tender processes. The DEQAS package includes technical notes on options for contracting evaluation teams and templates and scoring grids for assessing evaluation proposals<sup>523</sup>. Procurement processes for CO-led DE are supported by REU by reviewing proposals and sitting on interview panels. Additionally, REU periodically update LTA holders with new regional evaluation plans, to ensure they are aware of upcoming DE work<sup>524</sup>.

## 12.6. Utility, use, and follow-up

### 12.6.1. Use of evaluation findings

The Evaluation Policy states that evaluations are most useful when planned and conducted with a clear intent and timed to inform decision making, when they engage stakeholders, and when evaluation evidence is available and accessible<sup>525</sup>. Feedback from REU suggests that to effectively use DE findings it is important to work early and continuously with other WFP units, including programme and partnerships, to better integrate evidence into programme design<sup>526</sup>.

For this, an Evaluation Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy (2021-2026) has been developed to promote evaluation use across diverse audiences<sup>527</sup>. In line with this strategy, for each DE the respective manager needs to develop a Communication and Knowledge Management Plan, setting out who is responsible for which dissemination activity, to whom, how, when and why<sup>528</sup>.

End-of-evaluation debriefings are institutionalized to discuss and reflect on DE, as well as to review lessons learned from the process to refine future DEQAS guidance<sup>529</sup>. These sessions are scheduled by REU in coordination with the evaluation manager and with guidance from OEV<sup>530</sup>.

Additionally, REU create thematic and country-specific evidence summaries from DE for internal dissemination, while OEV synthesizes DE evidence on relevant themes. OEV encourages the dissemination of DE findings through diverse methods, including distributing full reports and summaries, hosting workshops,

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<sup>521</sup> WFP (2020), Foreword.

<sup>522</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>523</sup> WFP (2023b), 144.

<sup>524</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>525</sup> WFP (2022), 39.

<sup>526</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>527</sup> WFP (2021). WFP Evaluation Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy (2021-2026). Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-evaluation-communications-and-km-strategy-2021-2026>

<sup>528</sup> Evaluation Communication and Knowledge Management Plan for Decentralized Evaluations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000002692/download/>

<sup>529</sup> WFP (2023b), 6.4.

<sup>530</sup> Information Brief on End of Evaluation Lessons Learned Debriefing. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000155976/download/>



and using communication tools like multimedia presentations and audio-visual technology<sup>531</sup>. Other learning initiatives include an internal WFP Evaluation Community of Practice, periodic Global Evaluation Meetings, Regional Evaluation Bulletins, and dedicated evaluation pages on the WFP intranet<sup>532</sup>.

Feedback from internal sources suggests that DE processes are seen as highly useful at the CO level, and that partners appreciate the value added of these types of evaluation. This is particularly noted when project or programme staff are actively involved as stakeholders in the DE, which enhances engagement and attention to findings<sup>533</sup>. However, internal perceptions of the value of DE can vary significantly among WFP country leadership. This may be influenced by prior experiences with DE in previous rotation cycles<sup>534</sup>. The presence of a dedicated Use Unit at OEV supports the utility of DE, and its surveys indicate a positive feedback from users of DE across different evaluation products<sup>535</sup>.

## **12.6.2. Management response**

Management responses are a part of the DE follow-up process. As per the WFP evaluation policy 2022, WFP is required to prepare management responses to all evaluations<sup>536</sup>. Management responses are prepared by the Directors of the commissioning offices and approved by Regional Directors for CO and RB level DE. OEV recommends an early and collaborative approach in drafting management responses, including engaging stakeholders already during the evaluation's final stages, reviewing drafts to clarify actions, and specifying actionable responses to ensure understanding and avoid vague or generalized actions<sup>537</sup>.

Management responses are uploaded in the dedicated corporate system for management responses (Risk and Recommendation Tracking Tool, R2). The Corporate Planning and Performance (CPP) division manages the tracking of the responses, while each commissioning office is required to update the implementation status of evaluation recommendations annually in this system<sup>538</sup>. CPP also compiles and disseminates a summary report on the implementation status of evaluation recommendations.

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<sup>531</sup> Template for Evaluation Brief. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000021055/download/>

<sup>532</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>533</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>534</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>535</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>536</sup> WFP (2022), 44.

<sup>537</sup> WFP (2023b), 6.2.

<sup>538</sup> Technical Note on Management Response to Decentralized Evaluation Recommendations. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000009333/download/>

## 13. WHO

### 13.1. DE architecture and its enabling environment

Decentralized evaluations at WHO are defined as those “managed, commissioned or conducted outside the central Evaluation Office, that is, they are initiated by headquarters clusters, regional offices or country offices and mainly comprise programmatic and thematic evaluations. In this instance, the central Evaluation Office would provide quality assurance and technical backstopping”<sup>539</sup>. The development of the DE system in WHO has been identified as a major priority for the Evaluation Office for the 2024-2025 period<sup>540</sup>.

The central Evaluation Office of WHO is responsible for overseeing the evaluation function within the organization. It provides extensive hands-on support to DE, particularly for DE of technical programs at HQ, since many HQ departments have limited experience in commissioning and managing evaluations. This support begins with initial consultations to develop a scoping framework, which outlines the evaluation’s objectives, scope, and intended use. Subsequently, the office assists departments in crafting the Terms of Reference (TOR), selecting an evaluation team, and overseeing the evaluation process from inception through to validation. Specific quality assurance advisors may also be involved in this process<sup>541</sup>.

At the regional level, three regional offices currently have a Regional Evaluation Officer in place; two of these positions are at the P4 level, and one is at the P5 level. These officers focus solely on evaluation. The remaining three regional offices have focal points who share responsibilities of planning, monitoring and evaluation. In all the regions, these officers report directly to the Regional Chief of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. Plans are underway to recruit three more Regional Evaluation Officers across three other regions, with these new roles being dedicated exclusively to evaluation tasks. The Regional Office’s evaluation staff with the support of the central Evaluation Office, extend technical guidance and quality assurance to DE managers within regional technical or operational departments and country offices, ensuring thorough guidance throughout the evaluation lifecycle<sup>542</sup>.

A 2024 WHO comparative study on evaluation functions within other UN entities launched by the central WHO Evaluation Office highlighted that WHO’s DE function is notably underdeveloped with regards to its governance structure and strategic focus on regional and country levels. The study advised that WHO regional directors, advised by the director of EVL, develop regional evaluation strategies to enhance the DE function to align with standards observed in comparable UN organizations. Additionally, the report advised WHO to strengthen evaluation capabilities at regional and country levels by establishing regional evaluation units staffed minimally at the P4 level, with reporting lines to both regional directors and the director of EVL. It also advised to develop a network of country-level M&E focal points in larger WHO offices to support smaller countries as needed<sup>543</sup>.

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<sup>539</sup> World Health Organization (2018). Evaluation: Evaluation Policy 2018. Executive Board EB143(9) 1143rd session 29 May 2018 Agenda item 4.3 Retrieved from [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/evaluation-office/b143\(9\)-en.pdf?sfvrsn=9db71109\\_4&download=true](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/evaluation-office/b143(9)-en.pdf?sfvrsn=9db71109_4&download=true)

<sup>540</sup> WHO (2023a). Evaluation: update and proposed workplan for 2024–2025. Executive Board EB154/31 154th session 6 December 2023 Provisional agenda item 25.2. Retrieved from [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EB154/B154\\_31-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB154/B154_31-en.pdf)

<sup>541</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>542</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>543</sup> WHO (2024). Comparative study of WHO evaluation function with selected UN entities: report. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/comparative-study-of-who-evaluation-function-with-selected-un-entities-report>.

## 13.2. Responsibilities for the DE function

### 13.2.1. *Management arrangements*

The WHO “Practical guide to evaluation for programme managers and evaluation staff”, released in 2023, specifies that the role of the evaluation manager is typically designated by the evaluation commissioner or the programme manager, and this person oversees and manages the entire evaluation process. The role can be filled by the staff member who is designated as responsible for managing the DE process<sup>544</sup>.

### 13.2.2. *Evaluation planning*

Evaluation planning at WHO is governed by a structured process managed by the Evaluation Office, which leads the development of the biennial Organization-wide evaluation workplan. This plan, which must be approved by the WHO Executive Board, includes considerations for budget and implementation reports. Since 2024-2025, the plan has more extensively covered DE. For each evaluation, the Workplan indicates the lead office(s) for the evaluation along with a tentative timing. An indicative estimate of the cost of the evaluation, and expected sources of funding, are also included<sup>545</sup>.

The selection of topics for evaluation is guided by three criteria: mandates, significance, and utility. While these criteria help prioritize evaluations, they are typically applied to proposals already put forward rather than used to identify future evaluations. Reportedly, the approach does not always allow for all critical areas needing evaluation to be identified in advance<sup>546</sup>. At the regional and country levels, where most DEs are conducted, evaluation plans and their implementation are reported primarily to Regional Committees, which function as governing bodies. Since 2024-2025, efforts have been made to align the global and regional evaluation workplans to ensure coherence and effective oversight across all levels of the organization.

### 13.2.3. *Financial resources*

As of 2023, the central Evaluation Office employed one staff member and two evaluation consultants who dedicate roughly one-third of their working time to supporting DE. In Regional Offices, the capacity for supporting these evaluations varied significantly, with personnel dedicating between 0.5 to 1.5 full-time equivalents<sup>547</sup>.

Funding for decentralized evaluations stems from a mix of sources. Assessed contributions (regular budget) primarily finance major DE proposed by Regional Offices, while voluntary contributions (extra-budgetary resources, including thematic trust funds, emergency programme funding, or project budgets) support additional DE, often those required by donors. Historically, evaluation workplans have not included cost estimates or detailed funding sources for individual evaluations. The Organization-wide evaluation workplan for 2024-2025 represents the first attempt to provide this level of detail<sup>548</sup>.

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<sup>544</sup> WHO (2023b). Practical guide to evaluation for programme managers and evaluation staff. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-DGO-EVL-2023.3>

<sup>545</sup> WHO (2023a).

<sup>546</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>547</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>548</sup> WHO (2023a).

The Evaluation Policy references the Joint Inspection Unit’s reference allocation of between 0.5 and 1.0 percent of organizational expenditure on evaluations<sup>549</sup>. However, the 2024 comparative study on WHO’s evaluation function highlights significant under-resourcing relative to the organization’s extensive operational scope and the complexity of its initiatives. While other comparator organizations have increased their evaluation resources, WHO has not, maintaining resources at about 0.1% of expenditures, far below the norm suggested by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). The study points out the need for an explicit budget line for evaluations and a target resourcing level of 1.0% of WHO expenditures to meet United Nations standards. Additionally, it advises enhancing human resources for evaluations both within the Evaluation Office and within regional and country offices to establish a well-functioning evaluation system. This includes allocating dedicated resources for evaluating humanitarian and emergency responses and integrating these financial strategies into WHO’s costed workplans<sup>550</sup>.

### **13.3. Quality controls**

#### **13.3.1. Quality assurance**

The WHO Evaluation Office supports the quality of DE with the publication of tools such as the 2023 “Practical Guide to Evaluation for Programme Managers and Evaluation Staff,” which offers guidance and standard processes<sup>551</sup>. An internal Quality Checklist has been recently developed to further streamline QA processes<sup>552</sup>.

To support DE, the Evaluation Office has established a pool of Quality Assurance Advisors. These advisors are experienced evaluation consultants assigned to assist evaluation managers in ensuring process management and quality control. At the regional and country levels, QA responsibilities are delegated to the respective Regional Offices’ evaluation functions, with Quality Assurance Advisors available upon request to support DE managers at regional and country level<sup>553</sup>.

#### **13.3.2. Quality assessment**

WHO has not yet established an external Post-Hoc Quality Assurance (PHQA) system<sup>554</sup>. Consequently, the responsibility for PHQA of DE rests with evaluation managers, often with support from the central Evaluation Office (if HQ-based DEs), Regional Office evaluation functions, or Quality Assurance Advisors when available. As indicated in the Practical Guide, DE reports are reviewed to ensure that they are clear, logical, and easily understandable, without any unexpected content. This process also verifies that the report adheres to the terms of reference, comprehensively addresses all evaluation questions and sub-questions, includes all necessary components for the initial draft, and follows the prescribed structure.

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<sup>549</sup> Joint Inspection Unit (2014). Analysis Of The Evaluation Function in the United Nations System. JIU/REP/2014/6. Retrieved from [https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu\\_document\\_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU\\_REP\\_2014\\_6\\_English.pdf](https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu_document_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2014_6_English.pdf)

<sup>550</sup> WHO (2024).

<sup>551</sup> WHO (2023b).

<sup>552</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>553</sup> WHO (2023b).

<sup>554</sup> Source: KII.

## 13.4. Ensuring impartiality and transparency

The Evaluation Policy defines impartiality as per UNEG Norms and Standards<sup>555</sup>. To uphold impartiality in DE, WHO requires evaluators to sign a conflict-of-interest form. Additionally, the DE manager is tasked with ensuring that the evaluation follows the established protocols to maintain impartiality throughout the process<sup>556</sup>.

The “Practical Guide” recommends that DE managers form an informal evaluation reference group or advisory groups to ensure a diversity of perspectives. The reference group should include key stakeholders knowledgeable about or interested in the program, whereas the advisory group should consist of evaluation or subject matter experts without direct stakes in the program’s outcomes<sup>557</sup>.

The Evaluation Policy also mandates that evaluation reports be publicly accessible in accordance with the organization’s disclosure policy. Currently, the central Evaluation Office’s website serves as the repository for DE reports, grouped as “Thematic”, “Programmatic”, and “Office-specific”<sup>558</sup>.

## 13.5. Professional standards and capacity

To ensure professionalism and the quality of evaluators, the Evaluation Office has established a roster of consultancy firms under Long-Term Agreements (LTA), alongside a roster of individually pre-qualified evaluation consultants. These resources are readily available to DE managers, who can request assistance during the selection process<sup>559</sup>. According to the 2024-2025 workplan, both the Evaluation Office and the Regional Offices are committed to enhancing evaluation capacity and broadening these rosters, with a specific focus on including more individuals from developing countries<sup>560</sup>.

In 2022, the WHO Evaluation Office revitalized its Global Network on Evaluation (GNE), an internal informal network of staff involved in evaluation, which had been inactive during the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>561</sup>. With a Steering Committee including all regional Evaluation officers, it is designed to enhance the practice of evaluation across WHO, aiming to improve performance and results through the dissemination of lessons learned and evidence-based findings. It serves as a community of practice for WHO staff involved in evaluations, fostering exchange of information, mutual learning, and support. Activities of the GNE include the exchange of information on evaluations, support for data collection mechanisms, planning of training events, and facilitation of participation in broader evaluation networks and meetings.

In 2023, a training programme for decentralized evaluation managers was launched by one of the Regional Offices through the UN Staff College. This initiative aimed to enhance the skills of evaluation focal points within its departments and country offices, and the insights gained are shared across other regions via GNE to encourage wider adoption. Another regional office has launched a training programme on results-based management, which included evaluation. The recently opened WHO Academy in Lyon, France offers the potential to include training on evaluation in the future<sup>562</sup>.

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<sup>555</sup> WHO (2018).

<sup>556</sup> Source: Agency-submitted template.

<sup>557</sup> WHO (2023b).

<sup>558</sup> Decentralized evaluations. Available at <https://www.who.int/about/evaluation/decentralized-evaluations>

<sup>559</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>560</sup> WHO (2023a).

<sup>561</sup> Source: KII; Terms of reference of the Global Network on Evaluation (GNE) available at

[https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/terms-of-reference-of-the-global-network-on-evaluation-\(gne\)-\(2022\)](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/terms-of-reference-of-the-global-network-on-evaluation-(gne)-(2022))

<sup>562</sup> Source: KII.

## **13.6. Utility, use, and follow-up**

### **13.6.1. Use of evaluation findings**

Organization-wide recognition of the utility of DE is reportedly nascent but gaining traction. Internal feedback highlights the role of individual “champions” within decentralized WHO offices who recognize and advocate for the importance of DE. Additionally, there is a recognized need to develop a clear vision and strategy for DE, articulating its added value and ensuring that the benefits of undertaking such evaluations are well understood and embraced organization-wide<sup>563</sup>.

To enhance the use of DE findings, the 2023 Practical Guide suggests DE managers organize stakeholder workshops before finalizing DE reports, to review the draft report and management responses. This process aims to develop consensus among key stakeholders on the intervention’s performance and future directions. Once finalized, the Guide indicates for DE reports to be disseminated to key decision-makers involved in the intervention, such as senior management, funding partners, and government counterparts. Additionally, briefing notes and other communication materials are variously prepared to summarize key DE messages for broader audiences<sup>564</sup>.

### **13.6.2. Management response**

The 2023 Practical Guide illustrates the provisions for evaluation follow-up, including DE. A management response is drafted to address the recommendations of the DE, detailing the actions planned and the responsibilities assigned, holding relevant parties accountable and ensuring that the recommendations are actionable. The programme manager is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the actions outlined in the management response, and for updating relevant information on a dedicated organizational database<sup>565</sup>.

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<sup>563</sup> Source: KII.

<sup>564</sup> WHO (2023b).

<sup>565</sup> WHO (2023b).

## Annex 1: List of interviewees

1. Ali Safarnejad, UNICEF
2. Amelie Solal Celigny, FAO
3. Andres Botero, IOM
4. Bikul Tulachan, UNICEF
5. Carlos Rodriguez-Ariza, UNICEF
6. Carlos Tarazona, FAO
7. Caspar Merkle, UNESCO
8. Claudia Ibarguen, UNESCO
9. Claudia Schwarze, WFP
10. David Rider Smith, UNHCR
11. Diane AbiKhalil, FAO
12. Elma Balic, IOM
13. Garikai Mabeza, UNDP
14. Ghada Alsous, UNDP
15. Grace Igweta, WFP
16. Hamed Aminuddin, UNDP
17. Ijeoma Samuel, IOM
18. Inga Sniukaite, UN Women
19. Isabel Suarez, UN Women
20. Jane Mwangi, UNICEF
21. Jeanprovidence Nzabonimpa, WFP
22. Louis Charpentier, UNFPA
23. Luca Molinas, FAO
24. Mar Guinot, WFP
25. Mari Honjo, WFP
26. Michael Spilsbury, UNEP
27. Mirella Hernani, UNICEF
28. Mona Selim, WFP
29. Nikki Zimmerman, WFP
30. Oyku Ulukay, UNDP
31. Oyuntsetseg Chuluundorj, UNFPA
32. Patrick Duerst, UNFPA
33. Poo Pringsulaka, ILO
34. Ricardo Furman Wolf, ILO
35. Riccardo Polastro, WHO
36. Sara Holst, FAO
37. Sarah Capper, UNICEF